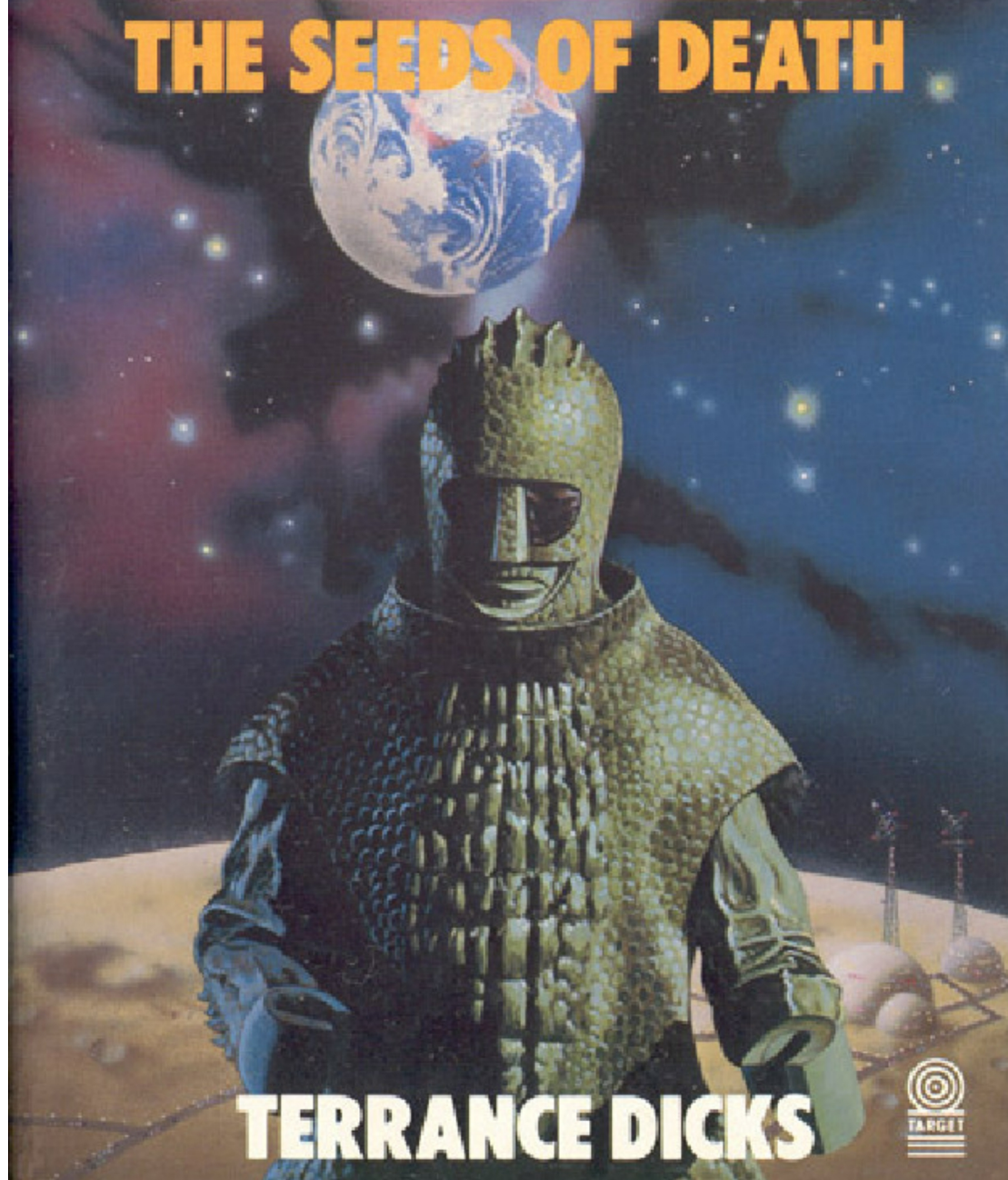


DOCTOR WHO

No.
112

THE SEEDS OF DEATH



Returning to Earth in the 21st century, the Doctor, Jamie and Zoe immediately find themselves caught in the midst of a crisis.

T-Mat—a form of instantaneous transportation essential to the smooth running of life on Earth—is going disastrously wrong.

The Doctor discovers that the T-Mat base on the Moon has been taken over by a group of Ice Warriors, led by the villainous Slaar.

Their home a desolate and dying planet, the Martian invaders see Earth as a world ripe for conquest.

But before they can colonise Earth they must dramatically alter its atmosphere. And so they unleash the Seeds of Death...

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THE SEEDS OF
DEATH

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1

Trouble with T-Mat

There were voices in the air.

Bombay to Tokyo shipment activated. Bombay sending – now.

Tokyo receiving – now. Despatch completed.

New York to Moscow, delay. Moonbase Clearance awaited.

Stockholm to Washington personnel transporation. Stockholm sending – now.

Washington receiving – now. Despatch completed.

The voices were calm, mechanical, inhumanly patient.

They were voices of the planet-wide matter transportation network, Travel-Mat – T-Mat for short: virtually instantaneous transmission of matter, animate or inanimate, from city to city, country to country; men, machinery, livestock, goods and supplies of every kind, from the point of manufacture to the places where they were needed.

All other forms of transport were outdated now, the cars, the trains, the boats, even the rocketships – toys for a fast dwindling group of eccentric hobbyists.

If you wanted to travel you simply stepped in a booth, dialled, dematerialised and reappeared at your destination.

As a result the air was clean, the fuel crisis was over, the accidents of travel a thing of the past.

Silently, swiftly, efficiently, T-Mat moved man and all the products of his skill about the planet.

And nothing ever went wrong.

Until one day...

The vast metal-walled cavern that was T-Mat Control Earth, was silent except for the steady drone of the computer voice. Control consoles of many shapes and functions were spaced about the enormous room, some attended by silver-overalled T-Mat technicians, others, lights flashing like silent intelligences, humming quietly away by themselves.

There was a line of T-Mat booths along one wall. T-Mat supervisors with clipboards walked silently between the countless rows of instrument panels, continuously checking and rechecking the flow of men and materials about the globe. Their air of bored calm was perhaps due to the fact that ninety-nine per cent of their work, as they well knew, was unnecessary. The ubiquitous, error-free computers ran T-Mat and if the technicians had all stayed home T-Mat would perhaps have functioned just as well –

or very nearly so.

There were still, however, a few functions left for humans to perform. Occasionally the constantly conflicting demands upon T-Mat channels meant that actual decisions had to be taken, priorities assigned.

For technical reasons, the sub-control for this incredibly complex traffic policeman operation was centered on the T-Mat base on the Moon. It was on the Moon that such decisions were frequently taken.

Meanwhile, here at T-Mat Reception Earth, Senior Supervisor Gia Kelly sat at a central command console.

Distinguished from the technicians by her black uniform trimmed with silver, Miss Kelly was an icily beautiful young woman with high cheekbones and fair hair drawn back in a neat, tight ponytail.

Her face, as usual, was set in an expression of calm severity. Even now, in the twenty-first century, the equality of women was still more theoretical than practical.

It remained as true as ever that, to attain the highest rank, a woman had to be not simply as good as, but measurably better than, her male colleagues.

Miss Kelly was as capable as she was ambitious. Her early promotion had been obtained by the stern repression of any softer, more human qualities that might get in the way of her efficiency. The opinion amongst T-Mat technicians was that Gia Kelly was a cold-hearted witch, and you'd better not slip up while she was around.

Unfortunately, someone was doing exactly that.

Miss Kelly sat frowning at the giant illuminated world-map that covered the wall in front of her, considering the light-lines that flowed continuously across it, frowning at the information conveyed by the calm computer voice:

'Non-arrival shipment of synthetic protein, New York—Moscow. Moonbase clearance awaited.'

Miss Kelly frowned. 'Brent!'

Brent, her number two, a serious-looking brown-haired young man, moved to her side. 'Yes, Miss Kelly?'

'Why is there a delay at Moon Control?'

Brent crossed to a read-out screen and studied it.

'There's some kind of mix-up over that Moscow shipment.'

It seems to have landed up in Canberra!'

'Fewsham again, I suppose,' said Miss Kelly bitterly.

'Take Moscow out of phase while they sort things out.'

Brent punched instructions into a keyboard. 'Moscow pending. Moonbase clear.'

The computer voice took up its calm, monotonous chant. 'Toronto—Calcutta shipment activated. Toronto sending now.' After the briefest of pauses the voice went on, 'Calcutta receiving now, despatch completed.'

Brent went over to the world map and peered up at it.

'Moscow ready now, Miss Kelly.'

Miss Kelly spoke into the microphone in her control console. 'Report on Canberra—Moscow situation, please.'

'Canberra—Moscow clear.'

She turned to Brent. 'Tell them to activate.'

Brent spoke into his own microphone: 'Canberra—Moscow, go ahead, please.'

Seconds later the computer voice came back: 'Canberra sending now.' Another brief pause then: 'Moscow receiving now. Despatch completed.'

One of the T-Mat cubicles lit up and hummed briefly with power. Suddenly there was a cheerful, balding middle-aged man in Controller's uniform standing inside it.

Seconds ago, Controller Osgood had stepped into a T-Mat booth on his country estate many hundreds of miles away, and now he was here. It was as simple, as unfussy, as that.

He stepped out of the booth and strolled over to Miss Kelly, smiling a greeting. 'Morning, Gia.'

The smile was not returned. 'Good morning. It's just as well you've arrived.'

'Oh? What's up?'

'The sooner you take over from Fewsham on Moon Control the better.'

Osgood groaned theatrically. 'Oh no, not again!'

'All T-Mat consignments are five minutes behind schedule,' said Miss Kelly severely. 'Fewsham just routed a large Moscow consignment through to Canberra!'

'He's a lunatic.'

'You should never have recommended him for an Assistant Controller's job in the first place.'

Her tone implied that the problem was largely of Osgood's own making, and that it was up to him to solve it.

'I know,' said Osgood simply. 'I thought he deserved a break.'

'Sentimental. He'll do something really disastrous one of these days and you'll have to answer for it.'

Osgood laughed. 'So? I'll go and work in a synthetics factory.'

Miss Kelly looked at him in unbelieving disapproval.

She was one of the new breed of T-Mat executives, fanatically dedicated to the organisation she served. As far as she was concerned, T-Mat actually ran the world, keeping the supplies that were its life blood moving.

Nothing was, nothing could be, more important.

Harry Osgood however was an old-timer, a practical nuts-and-bolts engineer who had worked his way up from the spaceyards in the old rocket days. There was nothing sacred about T-Mats as far as he was concerned. It was just another job.

Miss Kelly shrugged. 'It's your career!'

Osgood grinned. 'So it is. Got a T-Mat cubicle ready for me?'

'Yes, number six.'

'Right. See you later.'

Osgood walked over to the cubicle and stepped inside.

Miss Kelly turned to Brent: 'Prepare lunar cubicle six for transport to Moon Control.'

'Ready and waiting.'

'Activate.'

She glanced up at Osgood, waiting in the illuminated booth. He had just time to blow her a kiss before he disappeared.

'Lucky he got there before the old man arrived,' said Brent quietly.

Miss Kelly nodded. 'Commander Radnor is running late this morning. Better keep a public T-Mat cubicle open for him.'

Brent flicked a switch. 'Local cubicle six, holding open.'

Miss Kelly glanced at the illuminated wall-map. 'Report Moonbase situation please.'

'Moonbase clear,' chanted the computer. 'Routine shipments now transferring on automatic control. Local arrival cubicle now activating.'

Another cubicle lit up and a tall, handsome, grey-haired man in the uniform of a Senior Controller materialised. He came out of the booth and marched over to Miss Kelly.

'Morning, Gia. All functioning well?'

‘Of course, Commander Radnor.’

‘In your case, Miss Kelly,’ said Radnor with ponderous gallantry, ‘efficiency and charm go hand in hand.’

‘I try to keep things running smoothly, sir.’

‘And so you do. Nothing ever goes wrong while you’re on duty.’

‘I don’t allow it,’ said Miss Kelly simply.

Radnor smiled and moved away to the automatic doors that led to his office.

Miss Kelly watched him go. Radnor was a bureaucrat, a politician, a public relations man, and, in her private opinion, a pompous old fool. But he was Gia Kelly’s boss and he thought very highly of her – which was all that mattered.

The T-Mat Relay Control station huddled inconspicuously on the bleak and sterile surface of the Moon. It consisted of a little group of survival domes, dominated by the twin aerial towers of the T-Mat Relay.

Inside the main control room, a smaller, more compact version of Main Control on Earth, Harry Osgood was shouting; ‘You may have been on duty all night, Fewsham, but that’s no excuse for these slip-ups.’

For all his apparent calm in front of Miss Kelly, Harry Osgood wasn’t nearly so relaxed about Fewsham’s erratic performance as he pretended to be. He liked his job with T-Mat and he intended to keep it. Despite their differing backgrounds, he and Miss Kelly had reached equal rank in the T-Mat organisation – which meant that they were rivals for any future promotion. Fewsham’s failure would reflect on the man who had sponsored him.

The object of Osgood’s anger, a thin, beaky-nosed young man sat huddled miserably over his control console. ‘They weren’t major hold-ups,’ he muttered sulkily. ‘Just a few minutes.’

‘Kelly was going mad back at Earth Control.’

‘She would!’

Fewsham looked so dejected that Osgood relented a little. ‘Look, I’m sorry, Fewsham, but it’s my neck in the noose as well, you know.’

‘I know,’ said Fewsham miserably. ‘I’m sorry.’

Osgood sighed. Young Fewsham was a bright kid with a quick, nervous intelligence that went to the making of a good Controller. The trouble was, he was still prone to panic under pressure. ‘All right, Fewsham, I’ll take over now. You’d better get back to Earth.’

Fewsham nodded wearily, and began moving towards the T-Mat booth.

Suddenly the silence of the control room was shattered by the shrilling of an alarm. Osgood looked pained. ‘Now what?’

Fewsham was staring at a flashing light on his control panel. ‘The outer door airlocks are open.’

‘Anyone outside?’

Fewsham shook his head. The crew of Moon Control hardly ever ventured outside. Now that it was so simple to return to Earth, there was no real reason to, except for the occasional maintenance operation.

‘Then how come the airlocks are being used?’ demanded Osgood.

Fewsham had no answer.

Suddenly there came the sound of a high-pitched human scream, abruptly cut off. They both ran towards the doors, but before they could reach them they opened.

Phipps, one of the technicians, staggered into the room.

His eyes were wide and staring with horror and he was gasping for breath, as if too shocked to speak.

Osgood caught his arm. 'Phipps! What is it, man?

What's happened?'

Phipps slumped against the wall, staring at him.

Osgood shook him. 'Come on, man, tell us!'

There was another shriek and the sound of running feet coming towards them. Seconds later a handful of terrified technicians burst into the room. 'Close the doors,' shouted one of them. 'We've got to keep them –'

He turned to close the doors and then froze in horror at the sight of the giant alien shape filling the doorway.

Osgood said quietly, 'Nobody move. Don't do anything.'

One of the technicians' nerve snapped. He turned and sprinted for the door on the far side of the control room.

'Harvey, don't!' yelled Osgood.

But it was too late. The giant shape in the doorway raised an arm and a strange high-pitched note sliced the air of the control room. Harvey's body blurred and twisted and somehow *imploded*.

With a terrifying shriek, he crashed dead to the floor.

Osgood and the others slowly back away, as the small group of aliens advanced into the control room...

The read-out screen in Main Control back on Earth was flashing a one word message: *DELAY*.

Brent shuddered. 'Not again!'

Miss Kelly glanced at the map. 'The Moscow consignment?'

'Yes. They'll think we're sabotaging their shipments deliberately!'

Miss Kelly spoke into her mike: 'T-Mat Reception Earth to Moon. Controller Kelly calling. Switch your communication links to video.' She looked expectantly at the communicator screen, but it was still blank.

'Osgood's gone too far this time,' said Miss Kelly, not without a certain satisfaction. 'There'll be trouble.'

Harry Osgood was most certainly in trouble, though not in any way Miss Kelly could have imagined.

He had discovered that at least one of the giant alien creatures that had invaded the control room could talk. For all its fearsome appearance, the alien was undoubtedly intelligent – and it had plans of its own: plans that involved the co-operation of Harry Osgood himself.

'No,' said Osgood determinedly. 'I refuse.'

The alien's voice was harsh and sibilant, a sort of throaty hissing whisper that seemed to put extra s's in all the sibilants.

'You would be wise to co-operate – immediately.

Otherwise you will be dess-troyed.' The last word came out in a vicious hiss.

There was a tense pause.

Osgood said resignedly, 'Then I suppose I have no alternative.' He moved towards a control console.

One of the technicians, a stocky, broad-shouldered man called Phipps, called out, 'Don't do it, sir.'

'*Silence!*' hissed the alien.

His back to the alien, Osgood's hands moved swiftly over the controls. The machine hummed with power, lights flashed, dials flickered...

'There *is* a certain amount of risk,' said Osgood over his shoulder. A wisp of smoke was seeping from the connecting panels of the console.

'You are wasting time,' warned the alien.

Suddenly a line of sparks ripped across the control panel and the wisp of smoke became a stream. There was a small localised explosion as the panel blew out, and then the instruments went dead.

The alien said menacingly. 'What is happening?'

'I'm afraid there's a fault,' said Osgood. 'The circuit's overloaded – very unfortunate.'

The alien stared malevolently at him, and Osgood faced its gaze, unafraid. He knew he wasn't going to get away with it, but then, he'd never really expected to. Perhaps Osgood wasn't such a dedicated servant of T-Mat as Miss Kelly, but still, it paid his wages. He owed it his skill, his hard work and, if necessary, his life.

The alien spoke at last. 'You have deliberately sabotaged this apparatus.' It raised a hand in signal, and one of its fellow aliens raised its arm, to which seemed to be attached a strangely-shaped weapon.

Lights flashed, a high-pitched note rang out and Osgood's body twisted, distorted, and fell to the ground.

'I thought this system was supposed to be infallible,' said Radnor irritably.

'It won't be anything serious,' said Miss Kelly.

But this time her calmness only annoyed him. 'I'm glad you think so,' he retorted.

Miss Kelly ignored him. 'Any obvious damage, Brent?'

'No damage reported. All links stable.'

'That's only local, surely?' snapped Radnor.

With the same infuriating calm, Miss Kelly said, 'It's only one step in the checking process, sir.' She spoke into the computer mike. 'Report on Inter City T-Mat breakdown.'

'Complete power phase blank,' came the reply.

'State of materialisation pulse generator?'

'Overloaded in power surge. No damage this end.'

'Check with Moonbase,' ordered Miss Kelly.

'Not possible. Primary video link dead.'

'Cause?'

'Under investigation.'

'You're *sure* it isn't serious?' said Radnor sarcastically.

Miss Kelly straightened up. 'Commander Radnor, my staff are running a thorough and immediate check. Until I have their report, I can't possibly answer your questions.'

'Then they'd better hurry. I want that report – soon!'

Abruptly Radnor left the control room.

Miss Kelly gazed thoughtfully after him. Radnor was beginning to panic, she decided. Unless the fault was located and cured very quickly he would be looking for scapegoats. T-Mat was in trouble – and so was she.

But even Miss Kelly couldn't begin to guess just how much more trouble was waiting for T-Mat...

Enter the Doctor

In a smaller, more oddly-shaped control room, not very far away, three people were gathered round a many-sided central control console. In its centre, a transparent column was gradually slowing its rise and fall.

The three around the console were, to say the least, an oddly-assorted trio. In the centre, wrestling with the controls was a smallish man with a mop of untidy black hair and a deeply-lined face that looked wise and gentle and funny all at once. He wore baggy check trousers, supported by wide, elaborately patterned braces, a wide-collared white shirt and a scruffy bow tie.

This was the Doctor, a wandering Time Lord now tracing an erratic course through time and space, with two human companions, in a highly advanced but somewhat erratic space/time craft called the TARDIS. The initials stood for Time And Relative Dimensions In Space.

On the Doctor's right, a brawny young man stood watching his efforts with an expression of gloomy despair.

He wore a dark shirt and a battledress tunic over the kilt of a Scottish Highlander. His name was James Robert McCrimmon, and he had been snatched from eighteenth-century Scotland to accompany the Doctor in his adventures. As far as Jamie was concerned, the Doctor was a sort of mad magician whose spells might, or might not, come off. There was only one thing certain about the Doctor: he had a reckless temperament and a great talent for getting into trouble.

To the right of the Doctor, a very small, very neat, very precise young woman with a fringe of short dark hair looked on with an air of equal scepticism. She wore a short skirt, a short-sleeved, high-necked blouse with a waistcoat over it, and high boots, all in shining, colourful plasti-cloth.

Zoe's clothes, like Jamie's were an indication of the time from which she had been taken. Before meeting the Doctor, Zoe Herriot had been a computer operator on a space station. Highly intelligent and with a great deal of advanced scientific training, Zoe had a precise and orderly scientific mind. Sometimes she found the Doctor's combination of scientific brilliance and personal eccentricity extremely disconcerting. The problem was compounded by the fact that the TARDIS, like the Doctor had an uncertain temperament.

It had just got them out of one terrifying adventure, and both Zoe and Jamie suspected that it might be about to land them in another. The central column had at last stopped moving, which meant that the TARDIS had landed.

This was precisely what was worrying Zoe. 'But if we've landed Doctor, where are we?'

The Doctor wrenched at the focussing control on the scanner, which seemed to have got itself stuck. 'That's what I'm trying to find out, Zoe!'

Suddenly an image came into view on the screen: a long thin tubular shape narrowing to a point.

Zoe studied it. 'A rocket?' she suggested.

Jamie looked accusingly at the Doctor. 'Hey, we're just hanging in space!'

'We can't be.' The Doctor twisted the scanner control.

Zoe reached for the console. 'Let's try and find a star we know.'

The Doctor slapped her lightly on the wrist and heaved at the control. The scanner swung away from the rocket and onto the helmeted head of an astronaut who seemed to be peering straight into the screen.

'What on Earth?' muttered the Doctor.

'What's he up to?' demanded Jamie.

Zoe said, 'He's trying to climb aboard!'

'Just a minute, just a minute,' muttered the Doctor. This control, it's so stiff – ah!

The scanner swung back to the rocket. 'Now, that is an ion jet rocket of the twenty-first century, while that helmet...' the doctor swung the scanner back on to the astronaut. '... that helmet is nowhere near as sophisticated.

Not later than 1960.'

'What about those letters on it?' asked Jamie.

Zoe read them off. 'C... C... C... P.'

'Of course,' said the Doctor. He twisted the scanner control again and the astronaut disappeared, replaced by a faded sketch on an antiquated looking flying machine with spidery foreign writing underneath it. 'You see? That explains it!'

Not to Zoe and Jamie it didn't.

'What is it?' asked Zoe exasperatedly.

'It's a flying machine – designed by a gentleman called Leonardo Da Vinci somewhere around the year 1500.'

Jamie gave the machine an aggrieved look. 'Oh, aye?

And what's he doing here?'

Zoe said sternly, 'All right, Doctor, where are we?'

'In a museum of some kind – a space museum!' The Doctor adjusted the controls and more images appeared on the screen. 'There you are... a balloon... a transporter plane...' The head of the astronaut appeared again. 'СССР

stands for Russia – in Russian. That's Gagarin, the first Earthman in space.' Another rocket appeared. Then came a view of the Moon as seen from space with lettered across it the title TRAVELMAT RELAY.

'Come on,' said the Doctor happily. 'Let's take a look round, shall we?' He loved museums.

The TARDIS doors swung open.

Jamie and Zoe exchanged glances and then went outside. Surely they couldn't come to much harm in a museum...

'Wait for me!' called the Doctor indignantly. Snatching a disreputable-looking frock coat from its coat-stand and struggling into it, he followed them outside.

The TARDIS doors closed behind them, and they found themselves, as the Doctor had predicted, in a museum.

As in any museum, there were central cases, displays and maps, charts and pictures along the wall. In this museum each was concerned in some way or other with flight, and in particular with space flight. There were balloons and early aeroplanes of every possible design, and a variety of rockets.

They wandered around, looking at the objects displayed.

Zoe noticed that the other rooms leading off looked like workshops and storerooms. She found a button set into the wall and immediately pressed it.

A wall screen descended and lit up, showing the view of the Moon they had seen before, the words TRAVELMAT

RELAY lettered across it.

A deep, reassuring voice came from some unseen speaker. 'Travelmat is the ultimate form of travel,' it announced heartily. 'Control centre of the present system is the Moon, serving receptions in all major cities on Earth.'

Travelmat provides an instantaneous means of public travel and transports raw materials and vital food supplies to all parts of the Earth.'

A flow of maps, charts and images accompanied the words. There was a view of the Travelmat Relay Station on the Moon, shots of happy citizens using Travelmat booths to whisk them from one capital to the next, flow-charts showing how Travelmat moved people and materials about the globe.

Jamie nudged Zoe. 'Travelmat? Sounds like a magic carpet!'

'Sssh, Jamie,' reproved the Doctor. 'I'm trying to listen!'

The voice boomed on. 'Travelmat has superseded all conventional means of travel. Using the principle of dematerialisation at the point of departure and rematerialisation at the arrival point in special cubicles, departure and arrival are almost instantaneous.'

'Faster than light,' said Zoe wonderingly.

The voice boomed on, giving an exhaustive run-down on the workings and benefits of the Travelmat system.

'Although the system is still in its relatively early stages, it is completely automated and foolproof against power failure...'

The screen went dark and retracted.

Jamie looked at Zoe. 'We've got our own system, thank you – only it isn't foolproof!'

'Now, Jamie,' began the Doctor reproachfully, and broke off, staring past his companions.

A man had come silently into the museum. He was covering them with a blaster.

In the Travelmat control room on the Moonbase, Fewsham was staring fearfully up at the alien leader. Behind him, the two technicians, Phipps and Locke, glared up at the invader in uneasy defiance.

'You saw what happened to your superior,' hissed the alien. 'You would do well to co-operate.'

Fewsham summoned up all his courage. 'Killing him didn't do you any good, did it?'

The alien said confidently, 'But *you* will do as I ask.'

'I can't. There's nothing I can do.'

'You will find a way. You do not want to die.'

Fewsham glanced swiftly at the two others. All very well for them to look defiant – their lives weren't yet under threat.

'I'm not that good a technician,' he pleaded. 'It needs an expert.'

The alien gave a hiss of impatience. 'You are the second in command here, therefore you have certain abilities. You must know what needs to be done.'

'In theory, yes,' admitted Fewsham.

'Then you will do it.'

Phipps attempted to come to Fewsham's aid. 'He's right, you know, he'd only make it worse. It needs expert technicians.'

The alien's head swung round to look at them for a moment, then turned back to Fewsham. 'These two – what is their status here?'

'Maintenance technicians, second class.'

Locke, the second technician said, 'There's only one person who can put things to rights – Miss Kelly, and she's on Earth.'

Phipps nodded. 'That's right. Without her it just can't be done.'

The alien regarded them impassively for a moment.

'Who is this specialist?'

'Miss Kelly's the Technical Co-ordinator,' said Fewsham. 'But there's no way to get her, now T-Mat isn't working.'

The alien looked round the control room. 'You have a video link?'

'Yes, but Osgood wrecked that too.'

'There is no means to communicate with Earth?'

'No.' Phipps's voice was almost triumphant. 'You've cut us off.'

'Then you are all useless,' said the alien flatly. 'You will all be destroyed.' He gestured to the guard at the door, who instantly raised its weapon.

'Wait,' shouted Fewsham desperately. 'There's the emergency T-Mat link – it only works between here and Earth.'

'You will activate it – now.'

'It's almost certainly damaged as well,' protested Fewsham.

'These technicians will assist you to repair it.'

'He won't help you,' said Phipps defiantly. 'And neither will we.'

'Then he will die. You will all die.' The alien leader moved to the doorway and paused. 'You will start work at once. There will be a guard at the door. When I return from my ship, you will have this T-Mat link ready for operation.'

He swung round and marched from the control room, and the doors closed behind him.

Without speaking, Fewsham moved to the console that controlled the T-Mat emergency link and began checking it over.

Phipps and Locke closed in on him, speaking in low voices, aware of the giant alien still on guard at the door.

'Don't be a fool, Fewsham,' urged Phipps. 'If you repair the link, these creatures will travel to Earth.'

'But what about us? They'll kill us!'

'Do you think repairing that will make any difference?'

asked Locke. 'As soon as he's got what he wants, we'll be useless to him.'

'If we co-operate there's still a chance.'

'Osgood didn't take it,' said Phipps.

'And you saw what happened to him. Do you think I want to die – like that?' He looked at the huddled bodies and shuddered. 'I want to *live*...'

'Have you found anything at all?' demanded Miss Kelly.

'Any trace of a reason?'

Brent shook his head. 'Every link has been double-checked. This end is absolutely undamaged.'

‘Then the trouble must be at Moonbase.’

Brent shrugged. ‘We have no way of checking their installation from this end – and they just don’t answer our calls.’

‘Where’s Commander Radnor?’

‘Not back from the Inter City Council meeting yet.’

‘He’ll expect a full report.’

Brent slapped a bulging folder down onto the console.

‘Well, there it is! We’ve checked everything, even the computer!’

The doors opened and Radnor appeared. He stood, looking grimly at them for a moment, and then marched over. ‘You have located the cause of this breakdown?’

‘Things at this end are absolutely clear,’ said Brent defensively.

‘That is not what I asked you.’

‘We cannot trace the fault, Commander,’ said Miss Kelly flatly.

‘Miss Kelly, I have a number of senior government officials hounding me. They expect a more informative answer – and so do I.’

‘I’m afraid there isn’t one, sir. The trouble is with Moon Relay.’

‘Then go and deal with it.’

‘And just how do I get there, sir – with T-Mat not working?’

‘We can’t even *talk* to them, sir,’ said Brent.

‘There must be some way to reach them,’ insisted Radnor.

‘There isn’t,’ said Miss Kelly flatly. ‘Unless you suggest we go there by rocket.’

Brent smiled at the almost insolent absurdity of the suggestion. All rocket travel had come to an end many years ago. Once T-Mat became established, rockets were obsolete, useless.

But Radnor wasn’t laughing. ‘A rocket... It might be our only chance!’

‘The only place you’ll find a rocket is in a museum, sir,’

said Brent.

‘Exactly!’

Miss Kelly said scornfully. ‘Even if there was a rocket that could still be made operational – there’s no-one left who could control such a project.’

Radnor said triumphantly, ‘That’s where you’re wrong, Miss Kelly. There is just one man – one man alone who could help us now...’

As it happened, that one man was covering the Doctor and his two companions with an ugly, old-fashioned, but still very dangerous-looking hand blaster. ‘For the last time, who are you, and what are you doing in my private workshops?’ he demanded.

‘There’s really no need for all these histrionics,’ said the Doctor reproachfully. ‘We’re quite harmless, you know.’

‘How did you get in here?’

‘Oh, the usual way. We just – materialised.’

‘The T-Mat cubicle always gives an automatic warning signal – and it didn’t. Why have you come here?’

‘To see your wonderful museum.’

Suddenly the man noticed the square blue shape in the corner.

‘What on Earth... That’s a twentieth-century police box, isn’t it?’

‘Well, in a way it is...’ said the Doctor evasively.

‘What’s a thing like that doing in my rocket museum?’

‘You might say it was a form of spaceship,’ began Zoe.

‘Sssh, Zoe,’ said the Doctor hurriedly. ‘I think we really do owe this gentleman an apology. You see we really are interested in your museum Mr, er...’

‘Eldred,’ said the old man ungraciously. ‘Professor Eldred.’

And indeed, he looked exactly like a professor, thought Zoe: an old man, still vigorous, with wings of white hair framing a high-domed bald head.

‘Look,’ the old man continued, ‘this museum is closed to the general public. You’ve obviously made a mistake.

Perhaps you’d be good enough to go now.’

‘Why? Are you in charge of this place?’ asked Jamie truculently.

‘I own it,’ said Eldred simply. ‘That is why I have the right to ask you to leave.’

‘There’s no need to threaten us, you know,’ said the Doctor indignantly.

‘Trespassers are not welcome. Now, will you please leave!’

Raising the blaster the angry old man marched threateningly towards them.

3

Radnor's Offer

It was Zoe who saved the day. Ignoring the blaster she stepped in front of the professor. 'But we're not trespassers.

We're really interested.'

'Interested?' Eldred paused. Somehow Zoe sensed that he desperately wanted to believe her. 'Interested in Professor Eldred and his antiquated machines? Come for a good laugh, I suppose, like the rest of them.'

The Doctor looked shocked. 'People *laugh*? At all this?

But it's a magnificent exhibition.'

The old man looked suspiciously at him. 'We've had enough souvenir hunters too.'

'Now look here, we're not thieves you know,' began Jamie indignantly.

'We don't want to take anything,' said the Doctor. 'We are genuinely interested in space travel.' He moved to the model rocket they had seen on the scanner, slim and elegant on its stand. 'Why, who wouldn't be interested in a thing like this? It's superb.'

Eldred moved to join him, looking sadly at the model.

'Yes,' he said softly. 'Magnificent. It was to have been the vehicle to take men beyond the Moon – but of course T-Mat put an end to all that.'

'You mean the model's been abandoned? But its speed and stability concept alone... surely it's a tremendous advance in rocket design?'

'Exactly,' spluttered the old man. 'Exactly! Here, let me show it to you.'

Tossing the blaster aside, he helped the Doctor to lift the rocket and stand from its pedestal and rest it upon a low table. He pointed to the sudden thickening at the base of the rocket. 'This was the secret, the real break-through – a compact generator of enormous power.'

The Doctor tapped the side of the rocket. 'This must be the secondary electrode accelerator...'

'That's right. It beat the problem of the neutral caesium ions – and, incidentally, magnified the G thrust to fantastic proportions.'

'That was awkward... What did you do about that?'

'I'll show you,' said Eldred eagerly. 'Come with me.'

He led the Doctor over to a filing cabinet and produced and unrolled a sheaf of engineering blueprints.

The Doctor studied them absorbedly. 'My word, yes, I see... this is superb!'

'Look at them, Zoe,' whispered Jamie, indicating the Doctor and Eldred. 'Like a couple of kids!'

'You can see he's almost in love with that rocket,' she said. To her embarrassment, Eldred overheard her.

'It's not surprising if I am, young lady. I designed it. I've been in rocketry all my life. My father engineered the first lunar passenger module, and I travelled on the last flight back to Earth – just before it all finished.'

'Before all what finished?' asked Zoe.

'Why, space travel, of course.'

‘But if the rocket was so good, why did you stop at the Moon?’

‘Because of T-Mat! T-Mat, the ultimate in travel – with as much sense of discovery and adventure as a synthetic carbohydrates factory.’

The Doctor looked puzzled. ‘But surely rockets would still be useful as an auxiliary means of travel. And how else is man to get beyond the Moon?’

‘Nobody cares about space travel anymore,’ said Eldred sadly. ‘Life was made too easy by T-Mat.’

The Doctor nodded understandingly. ‘So your project lost Government backing, I suppose?’

‘The project was abandoned,’ said Eldred sadly. A sudden gleam came into his eye. ‘Except by me..’

Fewsham was working single-handed on the T-Mat link, so far with very little success.

He turned frantically to Locke and Phipps. ‘You’ve got to help me. If we don’t repair it, we’ll all be killed.’

‘Maybe we could repair it and T-Mat back to Earth?’ suggested Locke.

Fewsham looked quickly at the giant alien guard. ‘With that thing guarding the door?’

‘Maybe there is something we can do,’ said Locke slowly.

‘I knew you’d see reason,’ said Fewsham eagerly. Locke crossed to the video link console and began to examine it.

‘What are you doing?’

Locke looked up at Phipps. ‘The video link isn’t so badly damaged as the T-Mat...’

‘We were told to repair the T-Mat not the video link!’

Ignoring Fewsham, Phipps crossed to the console. ‘Let’s have a look. Even if we can’t escape ourselves, we might be able to get a warning message through on video.’

‘The guard will see what you’re doing,’ whispered Fewsham. ‘They’ll kill you. They’ll kill us all!’

Without looking up, Locke said, ‘You play your game, Fewsham, and we’ll play ours.’

The alien guard looked on impassively as the two men went on with their work.

‘No more money, no more research facilities,’ said professor Eldred sadly. ‘A life’s work abandoned, just like that. All thanks to T-Mat.’

The Doctor said, ‘I can understand your sense of bitterness, Professor. It’s very short-sighted of the Government to put all their eggs into one basket.’

Suddenly Eldred seemed to recollect his earlier suspicions. ‘Look, you still haven’t told me who you are or what you’re doing here.’

Before the Doctor could reply, they were interrupted by the sound of an electronic bleeping. Eldred looked even more suspicious. ‘That’s the main door alarm. What’s going on?’

Suddenly the room’s main doors slid open, revealing a tall grey-haired man, and an attractive but severe-looking young woman.

Professor Eldred glared at them, like one whose worst suspicions have just been confirmed. ‘Commander Radnor!’

Come and see how your spies are getting on?’

Radnor gave him a puzzled look, and turned to the Doctor with the accomplished courtesy of the practiced politician. ‘I’m sorry, I don’t think we’ve met. My name is Radnor, and this is Miss Kelly.’

‘How do you do?’ said the Doctor with equal politeness.

‘This is Zoe, this is Jamie and I’m the Doctor.’

Eldred watched them with an expression of scornful disbelief. ‘Come on now, Radnor, don’t pretend you don’t know them.’

‘I can assure you I’ve never met them before. They’re complete strangers.’

Eldred snorted unbelievably.

Jamie looked at the Doctor. ‘What are they on about?’

‘I’ve no idea, Jamie, but I think we’d better keep out of the way.’

The Doctor took Zoe’s arm. ‘Just look at this model, you two. It’s quite fascinating.’

They hovered in the background, pretending to examine the rocket model, while the dispute between Eldred and Radnor raged on.

‘I see,’ Eldred was saying scornfully. ‘I catch three strangers prying around my museum and then, by the merest chance, you turn up on their heels.’

‘My dear Daniel, I merely came for the pleasure of a chat with a very old friend.’

‘Why? It’s a pleasure you’ve managed to do without for a number of years.’

Radnor beamed. ‘Well, old times... friendship doesn’t die, eh?’

‘Our friendship ended the day you walked out of my laboratory to join the Government Administration on T-Mat.’

Radnor shrugged. ‘Different men, different careers...’

‘Yes, indeed,’ said Eldred bitterly. ‘Only you happened to know which career was going to be financed with generous Government funds.’

Now Radnor was becoming angry. ‘You could have come over with me. We asked you to join us.’

‘And work as Miss Kelly’s assistant, perhaps?’

Miss Kelly said seriously. ‘I respect your work very much, Professor Eldred. We’d have welcomed you on T-Mat.’

‘I happen to prefer rockets – obsolete as they are!’

Radnor gave him a meaning look. ‘Oh, not so obsolete as all that, perhaps – eh, Daniel?’

The old man glared suspiciously at him. ‘And what does that mean?’

‘We don’t miss much, you know.’

‘So you *have* been spying on me?’

‘No, no, we stopped all that some time ago.’

‘I should think so too. What’s wrong with running a private museum?’

‘Nothing. But then, you’re going a little more than that – aren’t you, Daniel?’

‘What if I am?’ said Eldred defensively. ‘It’s a free country, isn’t it? A man’s entitled to a hobby.’

‘Rather more than a hobby,’ said Radnor smoothly.

‘After all, preparing a rocket for an unauthorised journey into space...’

‘All right, so you know,’ said Eldred defiantly. ‘What do you intend to do about it?’

Radnor produced another of his practical politician's smiles. 'My dear chap – help you, of course.'

It was the one response that Eldred wasn't prepared for.

'*What* did you say?'

'You can make your little trip, Daniel, and with full Government backing. Just as long as it's to the Moon.'

'There's a minor fault developed at T-Mat control on the Moonbase,' said Miss Kelly smoothly. 'We have to put it right – quickly.'

'I thought T-Mat was infallible,' sneered Eldred.

'It will be – eventually. However, at the present moment, we have no way of reaching the Moon.'

Eldred laughed out loud. 'Except by my out-of-date rocket? Oh, that's rich. So, you need me after all?'

'I thought you'd be taken with the idea, Daniel,' said Radnor ingratiatingly. 'And a generous grant from Government funds won't come amiss, eh? How soon can you be ready to, er, blast off? Can you give us an approximate ETA? It is rather urgent...'

'I could – but I won't,' said Eldred calmly.

'But why, Daniel? Why? I assure you, there are no strings...'

'I don't have to give you my reasons, Radnor. I'm just telling you – I refuse.'

Watched by the terrified Fewsham, Phipps and Locke were completing the repairs to the video link.

Phipps straightened up. 'That should do it.'

Locke nodded grimly. 'I'll switch on the power.'

'You fools,' moaned Fewsham. 'When they find out we'll all be killed!'

Cautiously, Locke started transmission. 'Moonbase to T-Mat Reception Earth. Moonbase to T-Mat Reception Earth. Emergency... Emergency... Emergency...'

'You *can't* refuse man,' shouted Radnor. 'There's more at stake here than an out-of-date rocket programme...'

The voice of the omnipresent computer interrupted him: 'Emergency message from Moonbase. Switching through now.'

A communications screen on the museum wall lit up and an anguished face appeared, filling the screen.

'Commander Radnor... Miss Kelly... we are in desperate trouble... Osgood is dead and...'

'Locke!' shouted Radnor frantically. 'Locke!'

The screen was blank and silent.

A clamp-like hand swept Locke's improvised video-link to the floor. Locke turned and looked up at the alien leader.

The alien's sibilant voice called, 'Guard!'

The giant figure at the door lumbered forward. Its massive body was covered in scaly green hide, ridged and plated like that of a crocodile. The head was huge, helmet-like, ridged at the crown, with large insectoid eyes and a lipless lower jaw.

The alien leader shared the same terrifying form, though its build was slimmer, the movements somehow less clumsy. The jaw too was differently made, less of a piece with the helmet-like head.

The leader's voice hissed. ‘ *Kill him!*’

The guard raised a massive clamp-like hand, which had built onto its top a kind of tubular nozzle. Light flared from the weapon, Locke's body twisted and fell.

Dispassionately, the two aliens watched his dying. The lives of inferior species were of no interest, no value as far as they were concerned – and to the giant green invaders all other species were inferior.

They were Martians, their armoured bodies evolved to withstand the incredible cold of a dying planet.

They were Ice Warriors.

4

Countdown

Fewsham looked on with horror as Locke's body gave a final twitch and lay still.

Purely by luck, Phipps had been clear of the console at the moment when Locke was discovered and killed. The guard by moving forward, had left him a clear path to the door. Phipps knew that he would only get one chance and he seized it, taking off like a rocket and sprinting for the open door.

'Stop him!' hissed the leader, but it was already too late.

Phipps was through the door and away into the maze of corridors.

'Hunt the one who escaped,' hissed the alien leader.

The Ice Warrior guard lumbered away in pursuit.

The leader turned on the terrified Fewsham. 'You allowed them to send a message to Earth!' he accused.

'They tricked me. I tried to stop them.'

'No matter. The one who escaped will be found and killed.'

'What about me?'

The Ice Warrior leader, whose name was Slaar, considered for a moment. As far as he was concerned, the fact that Fewsham had stood by while the others tried to outwit their captors was an offence punishable by death.

But on the other hand...

Slaar was under orders from the High Command, and an important part of those orders was that he should get T-Mat into operation. Unfortunately these humans were showing a tiresome tendency to get themselves killed rather than co-operate with him. And Fewsham was now the sole surviving human captive...

Slaar advanced menacingly on the terrified human.

'Have you repaired the T-Mat link?' he asked.

'Not yet. It isn't easy...'

'But it is possible?'

'Yes! But you must give me time...'

'Very well. Continue to work. You know what will happen if you fail.'

Fewsham glanced at Locke's huddled body and hurriedly looked away.

'Exactly!' hissed Slaar. 'If you fail, you too will die!'

Commander Radnor was using all his powers of persuasion on Professor Eldred – but with very little success.

'Daniel,' he pleaded, 'don't you see that this is beyond our petty quarrel about T-Mats and rockets? Those men at Moonbase are in serious trouble. We've got to help them.'

'Then you'll have to find some other way.'

Miss Kelly added her persuasions to Radnor's. 'With T-Mat dead there is no other way. Your rocket is our only hope of getting to the Moon.'

The Doctor couldn't stay silent any longer. 'Professor, please listen to them.'

'Oh, I'm listening,' said Eldred sadly.

‘Forget your wounded pride,’ urged the Doctor. ‘In a way, this is a triumph for you and your rocket.’

‘It is?’

‘Of course it is,’ said Radnor. ‘The Government recognises the fact.’

‘Then the Government is going to be disappointed.’

Radnor looked helplessly at the others. ‘I just don’t understand.’

For a moment Eldred stayed obstinately silent. Then he heaved a deep sigh. ‘I’d better be frank with you. It’s true I played with the idea of making another space flight, I even worked on the rocket. But it was just a dream, an illusion for a disappointed old man.’

Miss Kelly said, ‘You mean there’s nothing? There *is* no rocket?’

‘Oh, the rocket’s there all right, it’s even partially prepared, but as for an actual lift-off...’ Eldred shook his head.

Radnor said eagerly, ‘We can still do it, Daniel. I know we can.’

‘It takes more than enthusiasm to get a rocket off the ground.’

‘Just ask for what you want – men, money, equipment...’

‘We need the one thing you haven’t got,’ insisted Eldred. ‘Time!’

‘We’ll set up a crash programme,’ promised Miss Kelly.

‘Draft all the best available technicians...’

‘It’s nowhere near ready, young woman!’ shouted Eldred. ‘Most of the equipment is still unchecked.’

‘Then we’ll check it. The computer can be programmed for that.’

‘It would still be impossibly dangerous.’

Radnor put a hand on his shoulder. ‘Daniel, with you in control, with you as the driving force – you created that rocket, got it off the drawing board – you can do it again!’

‘Those days are long past. My heart wouldn’t take the strain of the G-force.’

‘That doesn’t mean your knowledge and experience are useless,’ pointed out Miss Kelly. ‘We still need your guidance.’

For a moment Eldred looked tempted, then he shook his head. ‘I can never go to the Moon – and neither can my rocket.’

As the argument raged on, Jamie turned to Zoe. ‘Can we no’ help them? We could use the TARDIS.’

‘For a trip to the Moon?’ said Zoe doubtfully. ‘We’d probably overshoot by a few million years!’

She looked at the Doctor, who nodded his agreement. In normal circumstances he might have risked it, but recently he’d been doing some work on the navigational system.

Much of it was in pieces, and it would take a very long time to reassemble – with no guarantee that they’d work any better at the end of it.

‘A few million miles or a few million years,’ agreed the Doctor ruefully. ‘I’m afraid the TARDIS isn’t suitable for short range travel, Jamie, not in its present condition.’

‘Still, I think we ought to help if we can,’ said Zoe.

‘Yes!’ said the Doctor. He stepped forward and said modestly, ‘I think I could get your rocket to the Moon.’

Eldred stared at him. ‘*You?*’

‘I have considerable experience of space travel, and so have my friends.’

‘But the rocket just isn’t ready.’

‘I think you’re overestimating the dangers, Professor,’

said the Doctor briskly. ‘How much work does your rocket actually need?’

‘It needs fuelling to begin with, and a complete computerised check out of all the instrumentation.’

‘I can arrange all that,’ said Radnor eagerly.

‘Don’t let him do this,’ pleaded Eldred. ‘The risk is too great.’

Radnor looked at the Doctor for a moment, then turned back to Eldred. ‘Believe me, if there was another way I wouldn’t even consider such a risk.’

Miss Kelly too was looking at the Doctor. ‘There’s always an outside chance that the fault will clear itself – or we might be able to effect a repair from this end...’

Radnor hesitated, and the computer voice broke in again: ‘Urgent message for Commander Radnor. T-Mat Receptions New York, Moscow, Tokyo express great concern over continued hold-up. Medical shipments and food supplies awaiting urgent shipment to Asiatic countries. Calcutta says position desperate. Instructions awaited.’

Radnor looked round the little group. ‘There’s your answer.’

The Doctor said gently, ‘I know. I’ll be happy to help if I can.’

‘You don’t know what you’re doing,’ shouted Eldred.

‘Don’t be a fool, it’s suicide!’

‘If the fault in T-Mat continues much longer,’ said Radnor, ‘there’s going to be world-wide chaos. The lives of millions are at stake.’

‘Infallible T-Mat putting the world at risk,’ accused Eldred. ‘And now you want to risk this man’s life to get you out of trouble.’

‘No,’ said Radnor quietly. ‘Not me – all the millions of people all over the world who will die if this fault isn’t corrected. I’m sorry, Daniel, I have no alternative. Miss Kelly, get all available technical personnel working to prepare the rocket.’

‘Yes, Commander.’

Miss Kelly hurried away to the communications console, and Radnor said gently. ‘We’d be grateful for your help, Daniel.’

Eldred snorted. ‘If that rocket’s going to reach the Moon safely, you’ll need more than my help – you’ll need a miracle!’

A huge scaly green form lumbered along the featureless metal corridors of the Moonbase. At the sound of approaching movement it paused, alerted, raising the built-in sonic gun upon its wrist.

Another giant form appeared around the corridor, and the Ice Warrior relaxed, recognising another of its own kind.

‘Have you discovered any trace of the escaped human?’

hissed the newcomer.

The first Ice Warrior said, ‘He has not been found.’

‘Continue the search. He must be found and destroyed.’

Slaar has commanded it.’

The two Ice Warriors resumed their patrol.

The first continued on its way until it paused outside a door marked *SOLAR ENERGY STOREROOM*. It hesitated for a moment and then went inside, glancing round suspiciously.

There was little to see: the walls were lined with metal shelves holding boxes of spare parts. Larger pieces of machinery, spare consoles, filing cabinets, an out-of-service energy convertor, were ranged neatly about the room.

Slowly the Ice Warrior moved into the centre of the room.

Its helmet-like head swung from side to side, then it turned away. What it had failed to see was the missing technician Phipps, flattened motionless into the shallow space between a massive instrument console and the wall.

As the Ice Warrior left the room, Phipps emerged cautiously from his cramped hiding place. He hurried to the door and closed it behind the departed alien.

Then, like the Ice Warrior before him, Phipps stood looking around the storeroom. He was looking for a weapon, or, failing that, for something that could be made into a weapon.

His eye fell on a metal chest marked *SOLAR*

AMPLIFIER. Opening the lid, Phipps began lifting the complex piece of machinery out of the box.

The early stages of the countdown had begun.

All the resources of a panic-stricken government had been called in to convert Eldred's museum and workshop into the control room for the hastily-mounted rocket launch.

A team of technicians was installing control consoles, telemeter screens, communications monitors and a complex assortment of other essential equipment. Eldred himself was supervising the work, assisted by Zoe and the Doctor. Jamie, completely baffled stood by, trying to look as if he understood what was going on.

Commander Radnor was busy at a communications console. Assisted by Miss Kelly, he was using his authority to ensure that the supply of men, fuels and scientific apparatus continued to arrive with the minimum of delay.

As she punched yet another requisition into the computer, Miss Kelly said, 'Commander Radnor, are you sure it's wise letting these people crew the rocket?' She nodded towards the Doctor and Zoe, who were discussing the intricacies of the ion drive with Professor Eldred.

'Wise? Of course it isn't wise. But what's the alternative? We stopped training astronauts years ago.'

'But who are they?'

'Some of Eldred's crazy friends I suppose. That odd-looking little man certainly knows his space travel.'

Miss Kelly looked doubtfully at the Doctor. 'How can you be sure?'

'You weren't at the briefing session. The Doctor, and that girl for that matter, know even more about space flight than Eldred.'

'What about the boy?'

Radnor frowned. 'I'm not too sure about him. He doesn't seem to have any scientific background at all.'

Raising his voice, Radnor called, 'Doctor?'

The Doctor ambled over to him, Jamie and Zoe close behind him.

Radnor cleared his throat. 'Er, Doctor... are all three of you planning to crew the rocket?' He glanced meaningfully at Jamie.

Jamie caught the look and said truculently. 'Aye, we are.

I can be useful too, you know!'

The Doctor said worriedly, 'Jamie... I hadn't really thought...'

'You're no' leaving me behind, and that's flat!' Eldred came over to join them.

'There can be no excess weight on this trip, young man.'

'How many does this rocket thing of yours hold?'

'Well, it was designed for a three-man crew,' admitted Eldred.

'Well, then – I'm going!'

Miss Kelly looked up from her communications monitor in alarm. 'Commander Radnor! Our stocks of chemical fuel are inadequate for the Moon journey and return.'

'What about other sources of supply?'

'New York and Moscow. But delivery is impossible because of the T-Mat malfunction.'

There was a moment of dismayed silence. Then the Doctor said cheerfully, 'Surely it's only a question of getting there? We shall come back by T-Mat.'

'Possibly,' said Radnor. 'That rather depends what's wrong with it.'

Eldred said gruffly, 'There *is* another source of supply.

There's a rocket fuel dump on the Moon, an automatic refuelling system connected to the landing bay.'

'Surely the equipment hasn't been used for years,' protested Radnor.

'Neither has the radio homing beacon, and if that doesn't work they'll never make a landing at all!'

Jamie whispered to Zoe, 'Mebbe we'll no' need to worry about coming back!'

'All the equipment is completely automated and solar-powered,' Eldred was saying. 'No reason why it shouldn't work, Doctor.'

'I'm sure it will!'

'Now, are you sure you can remember all your briefing?'

'Oh, I think so – and even if I can't, Zoe has total recall.'

Eldred produced a bulging plastic folder. 'I've written it all down for you, just in case. There's a map of the Moonbase here as well. You remember how to activate the homing beam?'

'Don't worry, my dear fellow, your rocket will be in good hands.'

Eldred went on fussing. 'Now remember, you only have food and water for three days.'

Miss Kelly said, 'Commander Radnor, I think I should go on the trip.'

'Don't be ridiculous, Miss Kelly. You're too valuable here.'

'But how can T-Mat be repaired if I don't go?'

'There's Osgood,' began Radnor. He broke off. Miss Kelly nodded grimly. 'Exactly. Osgood's dead.'

'There are the other technicians...'

'– who may be dead as well by now. I still think I should go.'

'No!' said Radnor fiercely. 'You're the only person here who really understands T-Mat. I can't risk you on this mission.'

Miss Kelly waved towards the Doctor and his two companions. 'Yet you're perfectly willing to let these three risk their lives?'

Radnor was silent. He could scarcely point out that the lives of three unknown strangers represented a very small stake as far as he was concerned.

The Doctor saved him from his embarrassment. 'Don't worry, Miss Kelly, we'll be perfectly all right.'

'How can you say that?' she said despairingly. 'You don't even know what the trouble is up there.'

The trouble, of course, was an Ice Warrior called Slaar who was looming menacingly over the terrified Fewsham. 'Is the Emergency link to Earth ready?' he asked.

Fewsham was working frantically. 'I've nearly finished.'

'Do not make any mistakes.'

'I warn you, I'm not an expert...'

'You will make it work,' hissed Slaar.

'Yes, yes, all right.' Fewsham spoke without looking up.

'Anyway, I don't see what good this emergency link is going to do you. You're only a handful – and even if you had a huge army of warriors, you couldn't send them all to conquer Earth...'

Slaar was silent for a moment. Then he hissed. 'We do not need an army. Earth will be ours for the taking – very soon!'

5

Blast-Off

Phipps stood gazing thoughtfully round the storeroom.

He noticed a number of solar reflectors stacked in a corner and went over and selected one. He found a tool kit and some connecting cable and began linking the reflector to the solar amplifier.

In the base of the solar amplifier was a coil of heavy duty cable with a massive plug at the end. Uncoiling the cable, Phipps began looking round the storeroom for a power source. He found one at last, beneath a hatch cover, itself half-hidden behind a pile of metal crates.

Opening the hatch cover, he revealed a massive socket with a power lever beside it. Above socket and lever, bright red lettering spelt out the words: *DANGER! SOLAR POWER LINE!*

In Eldred's workshop, now an improvised rocket launch control, members of the launch crew were gathered at their control consoles. Eldred and Kelly were running through the final checks. The Doctor, Jamie and Zoe were already on board the rocket.

'Ignition reserve power,' said Eldred.

Zoe's clear voice came back over the receiver. 'Fully charted.'

Then Miss Kelly: 'Internal atmosphere settings?'

The Doctor's voice came back. 'All normal.'

The list of checks continued until at last Miss Kelly sat back with a sigh of relief. 'Lift-off activation check, complete, Commander Radnor. All systems alpha-green.'

At her side, Radnor was listening intently. 'Well done!'

Everything completed in record time, and not a thing wrong.'

'So far,' said Eldred gloomily.

Radnor said, 'Doctor? I'd like a final check on procedure when you land, please.'

The Doctor's cheerful voice crackled back through the speakers. 'Yes, yes, I know. We're to re-establish video contact with Earth as soon as possible.'

'That's right. Once we can see what's wrong, you can repair it under Miss Kelly's supervision.'

'Right you are,' said the Doctor, thinking privately that he'd probably just get on with fixing T-Mat himself, without supervision from Miss Kelly or anyone else.

Politely he added, 'We're ready when you are!'

Wincing a little at the Doctor's informality, Miss Kelly said, 'Link program to telemeter guidance. Three minutes.'

Countdown will begin at T-minus sixty seconds.'

Radnor leaned forward. 'This is it! Prepare for countdown.'

Miss Kelly said, 'All functions now on computer control. Clear launching site...'

In the cramped rocket cabin, the Doctor, Jamie and Zoe were strapped into their three chairs, following the launch procedure through their headphones.

The cabin was tiny, and the three chairs and their three bodies pretty well filled it up. The cabin walls were lined with dials and instruments so that the whole cabin served as a cockpit.

The Doctor sat in the central pilot seat, Jamie on his left, Zoe on his right. The voices of the launch crew formed a continuous background buzz over the cabin speakers.

‘Three minutes can seem a very long time,’ whispered Zoe.

The Doctor said, ‘Now, remember your take-off briefing, won’t you, Jamie?’

‘Aye, I know all about this G-force stuff,’ growled Jamie.

‘You don’t know it till you’ve experienced it,’ said Zoe severely.

‘All right, all right.’

To be honest, Jamie was feeling more than a little out of his depth. It had been all well and good insisting on his right to be one of the rocket crew. However, when Eldred led them to the launch pad behind his workshop, and Jamie looked up at the rocket towering above him, he began wondering what he was letting himself into.

The journey to the top of the rocket on the lift gantry had been pretty terrifying in itself. Now Jamie sat huddled in his seat, reflecting that he was soon going to be a lot further off the ground before very much longer.

Miss Kelly’s voice broke into his thoughts. ‘T-minus sixty seconds.’

‘One minute to zero,’ warned the Doctor. ‘Hold tight everybody.’

In the improvised control room everyone’s eyes were fixed on the shape of the rocket, endlessly repeated on the banks of monitor screens.

Miss Kelly’s calm voice took up the final stages of the countdown. ‘T-minus ten... nine... eight... seven... six...

five... four... three... two... one...’

With a roar that shook the control room, rocket motors flamed, and the silver column lifted off the pad and sped skywards.

Miss Kelly slumped back in her seat, suddenly exhausted from all the long hours of work. ‘We have lift-off!’

A ragged cheer went up from the exhausted launch crew. Just for a moment all of them were touched by the romance of rocketry.

Eldred stood looking at a monitor, watching the rocket streaking steadily upwards. On his face was the incredulous delight of a man who sees his lifelong dream come true.

Then a shadow of sadness crossed his face. For him, the dream had become reality too late. From now on, he could only watch...

Even Radnor was strangely moved by the occasion. ‘I never thought to see that again... a rocket rising in flight!’

‘It’s beautiful... beautiful,’ said Eldred. ‘Let’s see how they are...’ He flicked a switch, but the monitor in front of him stayed blank.

He turned to Miss Kelly in panic. ‘The link is dead!’

‘Something must have gone wrong on lift-off,’ muttered Radnor.

‘Try the back-up channel, Miss Kelly.’

Miss Kelly adjusted controls on her console, but the monitor screen stayed dark.

‘It’s no good. There’s nothing.’

Radnor looked at her in horror. 'Then we're completely out of touch with the rocket..

'What about audio link?' asked Eldred.

Miss Kelly switched to audio. 'Earth control to rocket – do you read me? Over.'

The only reply was a fierce crackling of static.

Jamie opened his eyes, feeling like a mosquito swatted into unconsciousness by a giant fist. None of the Doctor's warnings had really prepared him for the sudden hammer blow of G-force. As Zoe had said, you had to experience it to know it.

Now he felt squashed, stiff and bruised all at once, and to make matters worse, some woman was nagging in his ear.

'Earth control to rocket, how do you read me? Please switch to audio communication. Do you read me?'

Jamie tried to sit up, and found to his horror that he was *floating* up, tethered to his seat only by a safety harness.

Without it, he would obviously go bobbing about the cabin like a balloon.

He looked round for his companions and saw that the Doctor and Zoe were conscious, both busy at the controls.

'Don't release your safety straps till I switch over to artificial gravity control, Jamie, or you'll float away,' warned Zoe.

'Earth control to rocket,' said Miss Kelly's voice again.

'Oh, wait a minute, can't you?' said Zoe crossly. 'We've only just recovered from take-off!'

Then came Eldred's voice. 'Is everything all right? We seem to have lost the video link.'

The Doctor was checking the instrument panel in front of him. 'Probably just a circuit fault somewhere. I'll...' He broke off, coughing and choking as smoke poured from the panel. 'The circuit's burnt out. I'll switch to secondary circuits.'

'Och, no,' said Jamie disgustedly. 'This is worse than the TARDIS!'

In rocket control, the Doctor's voice faded away into a blur of static.

Eldred called, 'Doctor! Do you read me, Doctor?' There was no reply. Just the continuous crackle of static.

'It sounds as if the entire communications circuitry has blown,' said Miss Kelly.

Eldred nodded. 'Let's hope that nothing worse has happened.'

'Keep trying, Miss Kelly,' said Radnor, Miss Kelly nodded. 'Earth control to rocket... Do you read me?'

On the Moon Fewsham made a final connection and slumped back wearily. 'It's done. The emergency link is working.'

The shadow of Slaar fell across him. 'Good.'

'What are you going to do?'

'Do not ask questions. Activate the link – but on

"Receive" only.'

'Receive? You mean you don't want to send anybody?'

‘Activate the cubicle – now!’

Brent was reporting to Radnor on the video-link from T-Mat Control. ‘We’ve double checked *everything*, sir. The fault is definitely at Moon Control.’

‘Thank you, Brent.’ The monitor went dark, and Radnor turned to Miss Kelly. ‘Do you think you’ll be able to direct the repairs over the video link?’

‘Provided the fault’s not too major, yes.’

‘And provided the rocket actually reaches Moon Control,’ muttered Eldred.

Radnor was about to make an angry reply when the monitor lit up again. Brent’s face reappeared. ‘Miss Kelly!

The emergency link with Moonbase has been activated.’

‘Has anyone come through?’

‘No. The link is set to receive only.’

Radnor looked puzzled. ‘Surely the rocket can’t even have reached the Moon yet?’

Miss Kelly stood up. ‘Moon Control must have managed some kind of partial repair. Brent, have a full emergency repair kit waiting. I’ll join you as soon as possible.’

‘Standing by, Miss.’

Miss Kelly flicked off the video-link. ‘Goodbye, Commander!’

‘Miss Kelly! Where do you think you’re going?’

‘To T-Mat reception, and then to Moon Control. If the link’s on “Receive” only, it’s the only thing I can do.’

‘But you don’t know what conditions are like up there.’

‘I know what conditions are like down here. And I know it’s my job to put things right.’

‘You cannot assume that responsibility without my authorisation.’

‘You stopped me once, Commander,’ said Miss Kelly calmly. ‘Please don’t try it again, or I shall be forced to go over your head.’

With a nod of farewell, she walked quickly from the room.

Eldred chuckled. ‘She’s after your job, Radnor!’

‘She’s a fool,’ said Radnor stiffly. ‘But I should hate to lose her..’

Phipps checked over his improvised lash-up for the last time. Would it take the power load? Or would the whole thing blow out, making it useless as a weapon and betraying his position at the same time?

He rammed home the solar power plug. All he had to do now was throw the switch.

His personal defence set-up completed, Phipps began to work on the second stage of his plan – construction of a communications device that would enable him to send a warning message to Earth.

The T-Mat booth in Moon Control lit up. Miss Kelly emerged, two technicians behind her.

The control room was empty except for the lonely figure of Fewsham slumped down in one of the console chairs. He leaped to his feet as they appeared. 'Thank heavens you've come!'

Miss Kelly glanced round. 'What happened?'

'It was Osgood... it must have been some kind of space madness. He just went berserk. It was terrifying.'

'Osgood?' said Miss Kelly incredulously. She remembered Osgood's cheerfully disrespectful farewell.

She'd always had a weakness for Harry Osgood, despite, or perhaps because of the fact that he was one of the few men who didn't seem in the least afraid of her. 'I should have thought he'd be the last man to crack up...'

'That's what we all thought,' said Fewsham simply.

'Where are the others?'

'When Osgood fused the controls, Locke tried to stop him. Osgood killed him.'

'What about Phipps?'

'He was injured in the struggle. I've got him in the sick bay under sedation.'

'And you?'

'I'm all right,' said Fewsham defensively. 'Nothing happened to me.'

'You look frightened.'

'Wouldn't you be – if you'd seen Locke and Osgood die?'

'How did Osgood die?'

Fewsham hesitated, as if confused by her rapid string of questions. 'His body's... out there. He just went... outside?'

'Without a pressure suit?'

Fewsham nodded.

'I see.' Miss Kelly turned to her waiting technicians.

'Open up all the control sections and computer links and check them over. We must assess the damage.'

She noticed that Fewsham was busy at the control console. 'Where are you doing, Fewsham?'

'I thought I'd better switch off the emergency link for the moment. I had to improvise a repair, and it could burn out at any moment.'

Miss Kelly nodded, satisfied. 'Good idea. And it'll stop Radnor sending a security squad to drag me back.'

She turned to supervise her technicians, who were already at work dismantling the control console.

Slaar and one of his Ice Warriors watched them from the corridor through the narrow gap in the door which hung slightly ajar.

'The other human is still free,' hissed Slaar. 'Find him.'

He must not be allowed to interfere with our plans.'

The Ice Warrior moved away.

His communications set-up now completed, Phipps hurried over to the power socket, and plugged it in. He had to unplug the improvised weapon to do it, but that couldn't be helped. He went back to his improvised audio set-up, adjusted dials and picked up the hand-mike. 'Hello, Earth Control. This is Moonbase. Emergency, emergency! Do you read me?'

The machine hummed and crackled but no answering voice came back. Desperately, Phipps began checking over the device. He tried again. 'Hello, Earth Control. This is an emergency. Do you read me?'

On the rocket ship, now rapidly approaching the Moon, Zoe was engaged in much the same task with an equal lack of success. She stood back, shaking her head. 'It's no use.

No contact at all. Every circuit's dead.'

'Yes, all very unfortunate,' said the Doctor. He began fiddling with the controls.

'Och, leave it alone,' said Jamie. 'We might blow the whole rocket up next time.'

'No use worrying about radio now anyway,' said Zoe practically. 'We're nearly at the end of the journey.'

'All the same I would have preferred to have kept in touch with Earth, Zoe.'

'We don't need them, Doctor. All we have to do is activate the Moon homing beam.'

'Aye, and how do we do that?' asked Jamie. 'We're no' in contact with anyone on the Moon.'

There was nothing Zoe loved more than passing on a bit of scientific instruction, especially to Jamie. 'It's quite simple, Jamie. We send out a coded radio signal which triggers the homing beam into action. Then we automatically lock on to it until we reach the point in orbit where we fire retro-rockets to land.

Jamie still wasn't convinced. 'If everything on the Moonbase is cut off, how's this beam thing going to activate?'

'It works from a different power source,' explained the Doctor.

'Solar power in fact. It shouldn't be affected by whatever's happened to the T-Mat system.'

'Aye, well, I just hope it works, that's all.'

'We'll have a lot of trouble docking at Moonbase if it doesn't,' said Zoe grimly. 'It could be quite a crash.'

'Well, let's test it, shall we?' suggested the Doctor.

'We're close enough now.'

He went to a separate console and threw a switch.

Immediately a rhythmic signal sounded in the cabin, three separate notes repeated over and over. Seconds later it was answered by a single clear note from the speakers.

'That's it,' said Zoe delightedly. 'As long as that note holds steady we're home and dry – no trouble at al...'

Jamie gave her a sceptical look.

Phipps was still trying to raise Earth on his improvised communication link. He was unaware of the fact that on a display panel above his head a signal light was flashing over the words, *RADIO LINK OPERATIVE*.

'Hullo, Earth Control,' called Phipps. 'This is an emergency. Can you hear me?'

Earth didn't hear him, but unfortunately an Ice Warrior patrolling nearby did. It swung round, lumbering towards the sound.

'Hello, Earth Control. Emergency!' repeated Phipps.

Then he heard the hum of the opening doors.

Looking up, he could see the giant green form on the other side. Before the doors were fully open, Phipps had dived across the room, unplugged the communicator, and was hiding behind the crates, the plug to the solar amplifier ready in his hand.

The Ice Warrior strode into the centre of the storeroom, and stood looking menacingly about it. Suddenly it became aware that it was standing in the centre of a circle of solar reflectors.

Phipps thrust home the plug.

Immediately all the reflectors flared into searing life.

Caught in the converging heat beams the Ice Warrior jerked and twisted, its giant body blazing with energy.

Then it simply vanished, vaporised by the colossal heat.

Phipps emerged from hiding, more than a little astonished by his own success. He went back to his communications unit and resumed the task of trying to raise Earth. 'Hello, Earth, this is Moon Control.

Emergency!'

Absorbed in his task he didn't notice that the *RADIO LINK OPERATIVE* light had blinked out.

In the rocket control cabin everything was silent.

'The homing beam's cut out,' said Zoe in alarm.

The Doctor turned to the trouble. 'I'll see if I can re-activate it with our signal..

Once again the three note signal filled the cabin, but this time there was no single note reply.

'What's gone wrong, Doctor?' asked Jamie. 'I thought it was all automatic and foolproof?'

'Something must have affected the solar energy system,' said the Doctor thoughtfully. 'Some kind of power drain.'

'And you said we were in trouble if it didn't work?' 'I'm afraid so, Jamie. Without the guiding beam it's impossible to land safely.'

'You mean we'll crash?'

Zoe said, 'Either that – or drift endlessly through space, with no hope of landing anywhere – ever!'

6

Crashdown

‘What’s your estimate of our course, Zoe?’

Zoe considered. ‘At our present rate of drift, Doctor, and allowing for all the usual gravitational influences, we’ll be drawn into the heart of the Sun in approximately five months and ten days.’

‘Aye, well, we’ve no’ to worry about that,’ said Jamie grimly.

Zoe looked puzzled. ‘Why ever not?’

Jamie was no scientist, but he was an expert in matters of survival. ‘We’ve got food, water and air for three days, remember?’

‘Wait a minute,’ said the Doctor suddenly. ‘I think something’s coming through on audio.’

A distorted voice crackled from the speaker. ‘Hello, Earth Control, this is Moonbase. Can you hear me?’

Emergency!’

The Doctor leaned forward eagerly, flicked a switch.

‘Hello, Moonbase. Can you hear me?’

Phipps was astonished and delighted to get a reply at last.

‘I can hear you loud and clear. Is that Earth Control?’

The Doctor’s apologetic voice said, ‘I’m afraid we’re not speaking from Earth at all. We are in a rocket orbiting the Moon.’

‘That’s impossible!’

‘I can assure you it is not,’ said the Doctor indignantly.

‘Now, what is your emergency? What’s happening on the Moonbase?’

‘We’ve been invaded. Aliens have taken over.’

As yet unaware of this fact, Miss Kelly watched her technicians restore the hatch covers on the various T-Mat consoles. ‘Right. Now let’s test it!’

Fewsham said worriedly. ‘You really think it’ll work now?’

No reason why not. We’ve checked everything and replaced all the damaged circuits. It ought to be all right.

Power on!’

One of the technicians obeyed. Nothing happened and a furtive look of relief flashed across Fewsham’s haggard face.

Miss Kelly frowned. ‘Hold it! Just switch off again for a moment.’ She went to the main power console and made a series of careful adjustments. ‘Now try.’

This time there was a low hum of power, and all the indicator lights came on in their correct sequence.

Miss Kelly gave a little nod of satisfaction. ‘Thought so, that’s fixed it. We’ll T-Mat to Earth and report to Commander Radnor. If you can hold on just a little while longer Fewsham, I’ll get a relief crew up to you.’

She flicked a control, a T-Mat booth lit up and Miss Kelly and her two technicians began walking towards it.

The control room doors slid open and Slaar entered, flanked by two Ice Warriors. 'Ssstop!' he hissed. 'You will all remain here.'

'Don't move,' warned Fewsham.. 'Do exactly as they say or they'll kill us all!'

Ignoring the warning, one terrified technician made a dash for the cubicle. One of the guards raised its sonic gun, light flared and the technician screamed and fell.

The second technician grabbed a wrench from the console and launched himself at the other Ice Warrior. He too was ruthlessly shot down.

Miss Kelly stood very still.

'Now,' hissed Slaar. ' *You* will remain here.'

Hope of contacting the rocket temporarily abandoned, Commander Radnor and Professor Eldred were back at T-Mat, listening to Brent's report.

'As soon as Miss Kelly and the technicians were transmitted the emergency link shut down again. I'm sure Miss Kelly will sort things out all right now she's there, sir.'

'I wish I shared your optimism,' said Radnor grimly.

'Computer, latest situation report please.'

The computer voice began unfolding a catalogue of disasters: 'Severe food shortages now imminent in all major European cities. Message to Commander Radnor from United States Government, quote: "Deepest anxiety felt here re T-Mat failure. Reassurance urgently requested that situation will soon be returned to normal"' unquote.

'Message to Commander Radnor from Supreme Praesidium, Moscow: "Praesidium expresses deepest possible concern..."'

'All right, discontinue!' barked Radnor.

The computer fell silent.

Radnor looked around. 'You see the position we're in, gentlemen? Every government in the world is screaming to know what's happened to T-Mat – and my chief scientist has disappeared.'

'Maybe the rocket will still get through, sir,' suggested Brent helplessly.

Radnor looked at Eldred, who had been talking on the video link to Rocket control.

'Still no contact with the rocket?'

'Nothing,' said Eldred heavily. 'Nothing at all.' The rocket's orbit had taken the Doctor, Jamie and Zoe round to the far side of the Moon, and Phipp's transmission had faded, the signals being blocked by the satellite.

For the moment there was nothing to be done but to wait to come back into range, and to think over the extraordinary story that Phipps had told them.

The Doctor had been doing just this for some time, wrapped in a brooding silence. It was clear that Phipps's story had caused him great concern. At last he looked up.

'How much longer, Zoe?' he asked.

'We should be back in range in approximately... forty-three seconds.'

'I hope the poor fellow's still able to transmit.'

'No reason why he shouldn't be. His signal was quite strong when we were orbiting his side of the Moon; there's no reason for it to fade.'

‘Isn’t there? It’s not his technical equipment I’m worried about, Zoe, it’s his survival.’

‘Because of those aliens he described? That’s what’s worrying you, isn’t it, Doctor?’

‘It most certainly is. How much did you hear about them, Zoe?’

Zoe rattled off what she had heard. ‘Bipeds, something between humanoid and reptilian, scaled or armoured, and armed with some sort of sonic device.’

Dangerous enemies were another of Jamie’s specialities.

‘Aye, that’s it. In other words, Ice Warriors.’

‘You know what they’re called?’ the girl asked.

‘Jamie and I have encountered them before,’ explained the Doctor. ‘They come from the planet Mars.’

‘What do they want?’

‘Well, Mars is a dying planet, you know, Zoe. The Ice Warriors need a new home.’

‘Why the Moon?’

‘I think the Moon is just a stepping stone.’ The Doctor’s face was grave.

‘Why did you call them Ice Warriors?’ Zoe asked.

‘Mars is a cold planet. They’ve adapted to that. It’s heat they can’t stand.’

Zoe nodded, absorbing the new information, filing it away in her computer-like mind.

‘We should be coming into range by now,’ she said.

The Doctor took up the microphone. ‘Hello Moonbase, do you read me?’

Phipps’s voice came back. ‘I read you loud and clear.’

‘Splendid! Now listen to me, my dear chap, we need your help to make a landing.’

‘You mustn’t land here.’ Phipps sounded horrified. ‘Stay in orbit and send a message to Earth, warning them about what’s happening here.’

‘Can’t be done, I’m afraid. We’ve lost radio contact.’

‘Then go back and warn them.’

‘I’m afraid we can’t do that either, not enough fuel. We need the fuel dump on the Moon.’

‘They’ll kill you if you land!’

‘I’m afraid we have no alternative. Now then, where are you Mr, er...’

‘Phipps,’ said the voice impatiently. ‘My name’s Phipps, and I’m in the Solar Energy Storeroom. What do you want me to do?’

Zoe said, ‘If we can adapt our homing equipment to your radio signal we could home in on that.’

‘Did you hear that, Mr Phipps?’ shouted the Doctor.

‘We’d like you to keep your transmitter going. We need you to send us a signal to home in on.’

‘All right, I’ll try. But to be honest I don’t know how long this transmitter will last...’

The Doctor rubbed his hands. ‘Right then, Zoe, we’d better get to work.’

Before long, they had most of the console in pieces between them, and were putting it back together in a completely different order. Jamie looked on resignedly,

well aware that the Doctor loved nothing better than a good tinker, and hoping desperately the whole mad scheme would work.

At last they had everything reassembled to their satisfaction. 'That does it,' said the Doctor. 'Now, let's see if it's picking up his signal.'

He fiddled with the controls and after a moment a steady *beep... beep... beep...* filled the cabin.

'There we are, that must be it!' said the Doctor happily.

'Now, Zoe, what about our approach trajectory?'

Zoe showed him a sheaf of scribbled notes.

The Doctor studied them. 'Splendid, I couldn't have done better myself!'

Zoe pointed to the final calculation. 'We need to fire the retro-rocket drives in seventeen point five seconds, Doctor.'

The Doctor was galvanised into action. 'Oh my goodness! Right, landing positions everybody, strap yourselves down.'

When they were all fastened in place the Doctor rested his hand on the retro-rocket lever.

'Two seconds, Doctor,' called Zoe. 'One... *now!*'

The Doctor threw the switch and the cabin tilted as the rocket swung into its landing position. As the descent began, the strain of the G-force flattened them back into their seats.

'Let's hope there's enough fuel left to cushion our touchdown,' called the Doctor.

'Aye,' shouted Jamie. 'And let's hope yon radio signal doesn't give out before we get there.'

'Don't worry, Jamie, I'm sure we're going to be all right!'

The Doctor's voice was confident – but behind his back his fingers were crossed...

'Hello, do you read me, Doctor?'

To Phipps's relief, the Doctor's voice came back. 'We're coming in on your transmitter beam now,' it said.

'Whatever you do, keep transmitting!'

Worriedly, Phipps studied his transmitter. It was such a bodged-up job it was a wonder it had ever worked at all –

and now three people's lives were depending on it.

Suddenly a valve began to flicker. Gingerly, Phipps screwed it a little tighter.

The valve stopped flickering – then suddenly it blew altogether.

The beeping stopped.

'It's cut out!' shouted the Doctor. 'The homing beam – it's stopped. I'll have to bring us down on manual the best I can...'

He began wrestling with the controls.

Phipps searched frantically through a box of odds and ends, searching for a replacement valve.

At last he found the one he needed, extracting the faulty valve with frantic speed, he began screwing in the replacement.

Jamie was watching the Doctor's efforts apprehensively.

'Hasna this rocket got a scanner, Doctor? Can you no' see where we're going down?'

'I'm afraid not, Jamie!'

Suddenly the *beep... beep... beep...* started up again.

'It's working, Doctor,' called Zoe. 'Can you lock back on to it?'

'I think so...'

Within seconds the Doctor had the rocket locked on to the beam. It steadied and began the last stages of its descent.

The Doctor mopped his brow. 'You know, I think we're going to be all right...'

There was a sudden sensation of speed, a jarring bump – surprisingly mild considering all that had gone before – and all at once everything was quiet and still.

The Doctor gave a gasp of relief, and began unfastening his safety harness. 'Sorry about the bumpy landing.'

Everyone all right?'

'Aye, I think so,' grunted Jamie. 'We're here, and that's the main thing.'

Zoe rose and stretched. 'What now, Doctor?'

'The first thing to do is refuel – you can see to that, Zoe.'

'What are you going to do?'

'I shall go and look for Mr Phipps of course.'

'What about these Ice Warriors?'

'It won't be the first time I've encountered them, Zoe.'

Anyway, I've got to rescue Mr Phipps, haven't I?'

The Doctor started studying Professor Eldred's map of the Moonbase. 'Now, we're already linked to the airlock, you see. Yes, and here's the Solar Energy Storeroom. Not too far away, and quite a simple route...'

'I'll come with you,' announced Jamie.

'No, Jamie, the more people the greater the danger. You stay here and look after Zoe.'

Zoe gave the Doctor a withering look. As far as she was concerned, Jamie was the one who needed looking after.

The Doctor disappeared through the door that led to the airlock.

Jamie turned to Zoe. 'What about this refuelling?'

'That's simple. It'll connect automatically from here.'

Watch!' Zoe studied Eldred's notes, then located and pulled a Lever marked Fuel Induction.

'Now, just keep an eye on that dial, will you Jamie?'

When it moves from empty to full, pull the lever to switch the fuel off. Can you manage that?'

'Aye, of course I can. I'm no' daft, you know.'

'Good.' Zoe began raising a hatch in the floor. 'I want to have a look at the rocket motors.'

'Something the matter?'

'I didn't like the way we landed. There may have been some damage.'

‘Och, I know he brought us down a bit rough, but it wasn’t that bad, was it?’

‘It’s not the landing we’ve got to worry about now, Jamie,’ said Zoe darkly. ‘It’s the take-off.’

And leaving Jamie with this disturbing thought, she disappeared through the hatch.

In the Moon’s T-Mat control, Fewsham was checking over a big illuminated wall map, a smaller replica of the one back on Earth.

‘Tokyo, London, Canberra... that’s the lot. The whole system is completely operational again.’

Slaar gave a hiss of satisfaction. ‘We can now send to any city in the world?’

‘Yes – anywhere there’s a T-Mat centre.’

Miss Kelly gave him a reproachful look. ‘Fewsham, do you realise what you’re doing?’

‘I’m trying to save our lives.’

‘What about the lives of the people on Earth?’

This was too large a concept for Fewsham. The fate of the world was an abstraction. On the other hand, his own possible death was terrifyingly real. ‘We’re not in any position to argue, are we?’ he muttered.

Miss Kelly turned away and walked forward to confront Slaar. She looked up at the towering alien figure unafraid.

‘Why do you want control of T-Mat?’ she demanded of him.

Slaar ignored her.

Boldly she went on. ‘You’re going to invade Earth, is that it? Well, you’ll be fighting the armed forces of the entire world. You’ll never succeed, there’ll be just too much resistance.’

‘There will be no resistance,’ hissed Slaar.

‘What about us?’ whispered Fewsham.

‘You will remain alive as long as you are useful.’

Miss Kelly glared furiously at him. ‘You won’t get any help from me!’

Slaar regarded her with a certain admiration. The Ice Warriors respected courage, and she was a better specimen of humanity than the miserable Fewsham, useful as he was.

Nevertheless, he answered her burst of defiance just as he would have that of any other captive.

‘When the time comes, you will do exactly as you are told – or you will die.’

The Genius

The Doctor emerged cautiously from the air lock, paused to consult Professor Eldred's map, and hurried along the gloomy corridors of the Moonbase.

The base had been constructed many years ago in the early days of space travel and it had been built on a large and ambitious scale. The intention was that it should be almost a Moon City, the first step on man's journey to the other planets.

The rise of T-Mat and the subsequent loss of interest in space travel beyond the Moon had put an end to all this. A relatively small central complex was used by T-Mat, and much of the rest of the base was disused and deserted.

The enormous metal dome was a maze of twisting metal corridors, abandoned control rooms and deserted storage areas. Some, though not all, of the corridor walls were faced with highly polished metal that reflected twisted shapes like a distorting mirror. Every now and again the Doctor would see some malformed shape creeping towards him, only to realise with relief that he was looking at his own image, reflected in some curved corridor wall.

The effect was particularly striking at the junction points where a number of corridors met, and more than once the Doctor found himself faced with a whole crowd of advancing Doctors. It was an eerie journey, and the Doctor was very glad when he reached the Solar Energy Storeroom.

Cautiously, he moved inside.

The room seemed deserted, but there were signs of recent occupancy: the ring of solar reflectors and the improvised radio.

The Doctor moved to examine the radio when suddenly a stocky figure leaped out at him, raising a heavy metal wrench. With a yell of alarm the Doctor leaped back.

He found himself facing a stocky young man in technician's overalls, a young man who looked haggard, grimy and exhausted.

'Mr Phipps, I presume?' said the Doctor politely.

'Yes. Who are you? Where did you come from?'

'I'm the Doctor, Mr Phipps. I came from the rocket – we were talking over the radio.' He looked admiringly at the make-do communications unit. 'My word, this is very ingenious!'

'Where are the rest of your party?' Phipps was puzzled.

He'd been expecting the appearance of a squad of Space Marines. Instead, there was only this odd-looking little fellow.

'The others are still in the rocket. How many Ice Warriors are there?'

'The aliens, you mean? Not many – but they're deadly.'

'Oh, they have their weaknesses,' said the Doctor mysteriously.

'Oh, yes? Well, they've killed everyone here except Fewsham, and he's helping them.'

For a moment the Doctor stood lost in thought. 'I see.

Well, there's only one thing we can do. We must destroy T-Mat.'

Phipps, a career T-Mat technician, was horrified.

'*What?*'

‘Surely you realise that the Ice Warriors are planning to invade Earth? Why else would they want control of T-Mat?’

‘We must destroy it to stop them.’

‘Do you realise what will happen to Earth’s communications if we do?’

‘It’s the lesser of two evils, my dear fellow,’ said the Doctor briskly. ‘We must destroy T-Mat before the Ice Warriors arrive in force. Now, may I use your radio? I need to speak to my companions. How does it work?’

‘I’ll show you...’

Jamie watched the needle on the fuel gauge reach the full point and switched off with the consciousness of a job well done.

The radio crackled into life. ‘Zoe? Zoe, can you hear me? It’s the Doctor.’

Jamie grabbed the mike. ‘Hello, Doctor it’s me, Jamie.’

‘Are you all right?’

‘Yes, thank you. Have you refuelled the rocket?’ ‘Just finished, Doctor. Zoe’s down below checking the rocket motors.’

‘Good, good! Now listen, Jamie, I’ve found Mr Phipps...’

‘Are you going to bring him back here?’

‘Eventually! But there’s something I’ve got to do first – put T-Mat out of action!’

‘What about the Ice Warriors?’

‘Now don’t you worry, Jamie. You and Zoe just prepare the rocket for take-off and wait for us. Goodbye.’

Before Jamie could reply, Zoe came back up through the hatch. ‘That was the Doctor,’ said Jamie. ‘He’s just off to destroy T-Mat.’

Zoe stared at him in horror. ‘I’ve just checked the main power drive. There was damage, serious damage. The only way back to Earth now is by T-Mat.’

Zoe grabbed the radio mike, ‘Doctor, this is Zoe. Can you hear me?’

Silence.

‘He’s switched off,’ said Zoe frantically.

‘What are we going to do now?’

‘Find the Doctor and stop him! Come on!’

Grabbing Jamie’s hand, Zoe hauled him towards the air lock.

Phipps was leading the Doctor along one of the main corridors.

‘Where is this leading us to?’ asked the Doctor.

‘Control Headquarters.’ They reached a junction and Phipps said, ‘We go this way.’

He led the Doctor down a side corridor and up a flight of steps. They moved cautiously along a higher corridor and saw movement ahead of them in the shadows.

Flattening themselves against the wall, they peered cautiously ahead.

An Ice Warrior came round the corner. It was pushing Miss Kelly ahead of it, one clamp-like hand gripping her shoulder.

‘It’s an Ice Warrior,’ whispered the Doctor. ‘It’s got Miss Kelly. How on earth did she get here?’

The Doctor moved a little too far forward and the Ice Warrior saw him. It raised its sonic gun.

‘Run!’ yelled the Doctor. He and Phipps fled back the way they had come.

The momentary distraction loosened the Ice Warrior’s grip just enough for Miss Kelly to wriggle free, and she ran after the Doctor and Phipps.

The Ice Warrior trained its sonic weapon on her retreating back – and the corner that would give her shelter was just too far away...

Glancing over his shoulder, the Doctor saw what was about to happen. In an amazing display of co-ordination and skill, he skidded to a halt, spun round and dashed back up to the bemused Ice Warrior.

Catching the upraised arm he swung the creature around like a monstrous maypole, spinning it in a complete circle. By the time the Ice Warrior had recovered its sense of balance, Miss Kelly was disappearing in one direction and the Doctor in the other.

Confused by the choice of targets, the Ice Warrior hesitated a moment too long and lost its chance at either.

The Doctor and Miss Kelly disappeared round opposite corners.

Angrily the Ice Warrior lumbered off in pursuit of the Doctor.

The Doctor shot off along the corridors, with no very clear idea where he was going.

He emerged into a kind of hall and saw a long line of Doctors reflected back at him in the gleaming walls.

Speeding past the crowd of his other selves, the Doctor raced up a curving flight of steps and onto a higher level.

He began to relax a little, convinced that the pursuing Ice Warrior was far behind him. And so indeed it was – but as he turned a corner, the Doctor was horrified to find not one, but two, Ice Warriors confronting him.

He had run so far and so fast that he had run into an Ice Warrior patrol approaching from the other direction.

Once again the Doctor stopped, spun round and took off back the way he had come, moving so quickly that the astonished Ice Warriors had no time to react. With two Ice Warriors on his heels the Doctor sped down the stairs and back into the mirrored hall, where he seemed to be surrounded once more by a crowd of escaping Doctors.

Realising that he had no idea which way to go, the Doctor ran towards a corridor on the far side of the area.

It proved to be a shortish corridor with two metal doors at the far end. The Doctor dashed up to them and tried to wrench them open. Unfortunately they were locked fast, turning the little corridor into a virtual blind alley.

By the time the Doctor abandoned his attempt to open the doors and turned to try some other direction escape route, the two Ice Warriors were blocking the end of the corridor.

They advanced towards him, the sonic guns on their arms raised...

‘Stop!’ ordered the Doctor.

Rather surprisingly, the Ice Warriors stopped.

The leading one hissed, ‘You must be destroyed.’ But it did not fire.

Following up his advantage the Doctor said commandingly. 'You have no orders to kill me. Your leader will want to question me.'

'All humans are our enemies,' hissed the second Ice Warrior.

'I can be useful to you – like Fewsham,' shouted the Doctor. 'Your leader will be angry if you kill me.'

The Ice Warriors still didn't seem convinced.

Reflecting that this was no time for modesty the Doctor bellowed, 'I'm a genius!'

'Genius?' hissed one of the Ice Warriors. 'Genius! You will come with me.'

The Doctor was led away.

Jamie and Zoe came to a baffled halt at a corridor junction.

Jamie looked hopefully at Zoe. 'Which way now?'

Zoe looked around her and admitted, 'I haven't the slightest idea. I'm lost.'

Jamie was outraged. 'I thought you knew the way.'

'So did I,' said Zoe ruefully.

'Och, we could wander around here forever, all these corridors look the same!'

'Sssh,' said Zoe. 'Listen.'

They heard deep, hissing breathing and the sound of heavy footsteps. Jamie grabbed Zoe's arm and dragged her into the shelter of one of the big metal wall-struts.

Zoe's eyes widened as a giant green form lumbered past.

Incredulously she took in the huge armoured chest, the massive legs, the ridged head with the terrifyingly blank eyes.

There was very little shelter behind the wall strut, and if the creature had turned even slightly it would certainly have seen them. Luckily it did not, lumbering straight ahead on its way.

Zoe waited, motionless, until the heavy footsteps and the sound of the harsh, laboured breathing had died away.

'What was that?'

'An Ice Warrior,' said Jamie with grim satisfaction. 'The Doctor was right!' He spoke a little too loudly, and suddenly the Ice Warrior swung round.

'Quick, it's seen us!' shouted Zoe. 'Run!'

They turned and fled.

The Ice Warrior fired but missed. Jamie and Zoe vanished round the corner. They turned into another corridor, ducked into the shelter of another wall strut and waited.

A few minutes later they saw the Ice Warrior move past the end of their corridor. It had lost them. 'What do we do now?' asked Jamie.

'Keep looking for the Doctor. Let's try and find that Solar Energy Storeroom.'

They moved cautiously away.

'I wish you'd tell me what you want me to do,' said Fewsham pathetically.

Slaar surveyed him thoughtfully for a moment. 'You will shortly despatch a certain cargo to a number of cities on Earth – Otto, Oslo, Stockholm, Hamburg...'

'Cargo? What sort of cargo?'

Before Slaar could answer, the Doctor was marched in under guard.

'The prisoner Kelly has escaped,' reported the first Ice Warrior. 'This human was found in the corridors. He is a genius.'

Slaar studied the Doctor with some surprise. Here was a new factor in the situation. 'Who are you? Where are you from?'

'I might ask you the same question,' said the Doctor boldly – though since he already knew the answer, he was merely playing for time.

Slaar turned to the first Ice Warrior. 'You will find the human Kelly and bring her back here.'

One of the Ice Warriors moved away, leaving the other on guard.

Slaar swung round on Fewsham. 'Who is this human?'

'He's not one of our crew. I don't know him at all. He must have just arrived here.'

'That is impossible,' hissed Slaar. 'We control T-Mat.'

'Our resources aren't limited to T-Mat, you know,' said the Doctor loftily. He had decided to accept his honorary status as representative of humanity, since at the moment there was no-one else available – except Fewsham.

As the Doctor had hoped, Slaar was immediately intrigued. 'You arrived by other means? By spacecraft?'

The Doctor's only reply was an enigmatic smile.

'That's impossible,' burst out Fewsham. 'Rockets haven't been used for years!'

Slaar advanced menacingly upon the Doctor. 'Then you are lying. You have been concealed here all the time.'

'Ah, but you can't be sure of that, can you?' argued the Doctor infuriatingly. 'The people of Earth may be preparing a whole fleet of rockets to defend themselves...'

Slaar seemed to consider this for a moment. 'No. Earth relies only on T-Mat. There is no defence against our plans.'

This of course was exactly what the Doctor wanted to know about.

'And what are your plans?' he asked keenly. 'Invasion by T-Mat?'

The Doctor was never to know whether or not Slaar would have answered his question. At that moment two Ice Warrior guards entered carrying between them a kind of container. It was ovoid, gleaming white and faintly luminous, with handles for carrying, and underneath it a kind of built-in, two-legged stand.

One of the Ice Warriors said, 'The Grand Marshal has ordered the pods to be prepared. You are to receive your instructions.'

It was obvious that for Slaar, the summons was one of some urgency.

'Guard the humans,' he ordered. 'If they try to escape, kill them!'

Apparently forgetting the Doctor, Slaar turned and marched quickly from the room. The Doctor watched him go, then turned and studied the gleaming white container.

Something told him that the answer to all his questions was inside.

8

The Pods

Moving very slowly and carefully, so as not to alert the Ice Warrior guards, the Doctor edged his way over to Fewsham, who was sitting slumped in his chair. In a quiet but strangely compelling voice, the Doctor said, 'Why are you helping them?'

Fewsham shot him a frightened glance. 'To stay alive.'

I've seen what they can do.'

'Do you know what's in that container?'

'All I know is they want me to send something to Earth by T-Mat. I suppose *that's* what's in it.'

'Then I've got to see,' said the Doctor determinedly. He sat down beside Fewsham. 'And you are going to help me.'

Zoe, Jamie, Miss Kelly and Phipps had all managed to regain the relative safety of the Solar Energy Storeroom, where they were comparing notes on their recent escapes.

'So the Doctor's been captured?' said Zoe in dismay.

'Couldn't you do anything to help him?'

Phipps shook his head. 'I'm sorry, there was nothing we could do.'

Miss Kelly nodded agreement, well aware that the Doctor had sacrificed himself so that she could escape. 'We had a job reaching here ourselves.'

'Aye, so did we!' said Jamie.

Zoe looked round the cluttered storeroom. 'Are you sure the Ice Warriors don't know about this place?'

'I don't think so,' said Phipps. 'One of them did manage to find it, but I dealt with it.'

'How?'

'I fixed up a sort of booby trap with the solar energy power line.'

Miss Kelly said, 'Those creatures look as if they were invulnerable.'

'The Doctor said they can't stand heat,' said Zoe.

Phipps was thinking hard. 'The heating system for the entire base is controlled from the centre. If we can reach those controls and turn up the heating...'

Zoe looked doubtful. 'How? The Ice Warriors are patrolling the corridors.'

'The maintenance tunnels,' said Phipps. 'Look, over here.'

He indicated a wall hatch, sealed with heavy bolts.

'They run parallel to the main corridors,' he explained.

Jamie seized on the plan with enthusiasm. 'Aye, the heat would knock out the Warriors, we could rescue the Doctor...'

'... and T-Mat ourselves back to Earth,' concluded Miss Kelly.

Zoe looked puzzled. 'I thought T-Mat had broken down?'

'Not any more,' said Miss Kelly. 'I repaired it. How do we get this hatch off, Phipps?'

Phipps looked round for his wrench. 'This part of the base has been disused for ages, the bolts could be rusted solid. It could take some time.'

Jamie spotted the wrench, snatched it up and set to work. 'We'd better get on with it then. The Doctor may not have very much time.'

'All right, Fewsham,' said the Doctor. 'Now!'

'I daren't,' whispered Fewsham. 'They'll kill us both.'

'Then I shall have to try it by myself, and if I get caught, which is most likely, we will both get killed.'

Something about the Doctor's quiet determination seemed to put heart in Fewsham.

'All right, I'll try...'

He rose to his feet and went over to the main control panel. Immediately the Ice Warrior guard stepped forward. 'Do not move,' it ordered.

'Your commander ordered me to prepare the controls for transmission. I'm just checking that everything is in order.'

'Return to your place.'

'But this is very important,' insisted Fewsham.

While the argument was going on, the Doctor too had risen, and was sidling stealthily towards the white container.

Meanwhile the Ice Warrior was still trying to resolve the contradiction between its orders to guard Fewsham, and what his captive was saying. 'If you are trying to escape, I shall destroy you.'

'But I'm not trying to escape,' pleaded Fewsham. 'I'm just trying to help you...'

The Ice Warrior reached its decision. 'You will return to your place.' Menacingly, it raised its sonic gun.

'All right, all right,' said Fewsham hurriedly. He scurried back to his seat.

The Ice Warrior swung round to cover him, and in doing so, saw the Doctor who had reached the strange container and was trying to open the lid.

Dropping the lid, the Doctor hurriedly raised his hands above his head.

The Ice Warrior raised its gun to fire...

'*Stop!*' hissed a familiar voice. Slaar had re-entered the control room.

He studied the Doctor with a certain grim amusement.

'Open it!' he commanded.

The Doctor hesitated.

'*Open it!*' insisted Slaar.

The Doctor lifted the lid of the container. Inside it, nestling on a bed of some kind of moss, was a cluster of round white spheres.

Cautiously the Doctor lifted one out, cupping it in his hands. 'What are these things? Eggs?' he asked. He studied the one in his hands, feeling the faintly grainy texture.

'No... Some kind of seed pod?'

Suddenly the little sphere in the Doctor's hand seemed to pulse with life. It started to grow...

It grew with amazing speed then, just as suddenly, it exploded, filling the air with what looked like a cloud of white smoke. Coughing and choking, the Doctor fell to the ground.

Slaar strode over to him, and stood looking down at the motionless body.

‘What is it?’ asked Fewsham. ‘What’s happened to him?
Is he dead?’
Slaar made no reply.

As Phipps had predicted, the bolts were stiff with disuse, but between them they managed to get them off at last and free the hatch, revealing a black tunnel-like space beyond.

Zoe who had been on watch in the doorway was suddenly alerted. ‘I think I can hear something.’

They stopped work and listened.

The sound of heavy footsteps, and hissing, laboured breathing came from the corridor.

Zoe peered out cautiously for a second, glimpsed a giant green form, and ducked hurriedly back inside. ‘There’s an Ice Warrior coming.’

Jamie hurried to the door. ‘Did he see you?’

‘I don’t think so.’

‘Best not take any chances.’ Jamie looked round, snatched up a crowbar and jammed it between the handle and the outer edge of the sliding door. ‘There, that should hold it.’

‘Nobody move,’ warned Phipps.

They all stood very still.

The door itself was made of a closely-wove metal grille.

Suddenly behind it appeared the looming shape of an Ice Warrior. The door vibrated, as the monster attempted to open it. The door moved a few inches and then, because of the crowbar, it jammed.

Jamie gave a smile of satisfaction – a smile which soon changed to a look of horror as the Ice Warrior exerted its full strength and the iron bar started to bend...

Jamie looked at Phipps on the other side of the room.

‘What about your booby trap – will it work again?’

‘It’ll have to be reconnected.’ Phipps signalled to Miss Kelly, pointing downwards.

She dropped to the floor, wriggled across it and reconnected the power lead.

‘Zoe!’ called Phipps and pointed again.

Zoe snatched up the solar plug and passed it across to him.

The bar, bent into a horse-shoe shape by now dropped from its place and the door began to slide open. The Ice Warrior came into the room, passing the crouching Zoe without seeing her. However, Jamie and Miss Kelly on the other side of the room were in plain sight.

The Ice Warrior advanced towards them, raising its sonic gun...

As it moved into the circle of sonic reflectors, Phipps jammed home the plug and threw the power switch. The reflectors blazed into life. the Ice Warrior, like its predecessor, jerked and twisted in the converging heat beams, then vanished, vapourised by the colossal heat...

Slaar stepped over the Doctor’s prostrate body and placed a pod inside the T-Mat cubicle.

Stepping back; he turned to Fewsham. ‘You will activate the cubicle and transmit to London,’ he said.

For a moment Fewsham hesitated, well aware that whatever he was being asked to do meant no good to the people of Earth.

‘Obey!’ hissed Slaar.

Fewsham looked down at the Doctor’s unmoving body.

Then, his last spark of resistance crushed, he began operating the controls.

The emotionless voice of the computer was still reciting its catalogue of disasters: ‘Emergency transport systems now in operation. However the situation is still extremely critical in most parts of the world. Primitive areas are surviving the best, but all major cities are suffering severe food shortages.’

Radnor and Professor Eldred stood listening in despair.

‘Without T-Mat, millions are going to die,’ said Radnor.

‘Especially in the big towns...’

Fewsham looked up. ‘Everything’s set up.’

Slaar paused for a step, savouring the moment: the first, decisive step in the Martian invasion of Earth.

‘Activate!’ he hissed.

The T-Mat booth pulsed with light.

Seed pod and stand dematerialised...

... to reappear, unnoticed for a moment in a T-Mat booth in Central Control on Earth.

It was Brent, entering the room, who spotted what had happened. ‘Commander Radnor! The T-Mat’s working!’

‘Working?’ Radnor leapt to his feet. ‘Miss Kelly must have got through!’

They clustered round the booth, staring at the pod on its stand.

‘What is it?’ asked Radnor, puzzled.

He nodded to Brent who opened the cubicle door and reached gingerly out to pick up the pod. But as he touched it, it suddenly seemed to pulse with life.

Brent snatched away his hand. ‘It’s alive!’

Before their astonished eyes the pod started to grow...

9

The Blight

With incredible speed the pod swelled to a considerable size and then burst, expelling a cloud of what looked like dense white smoke.

Brent, who had been nearest to the pod, fell choking to the ground. Coughing and half-blinded, Radnor knelt beside him.

‘He’s dead... must be that smoke... keep back.’ Radnor stumbled to his feet. ‘Everybody get out of here!’

Coughing and choking, the technicians moved away.

Eldred was slumped choking over a console. ‘Air... conditioning...’ he gasped.

Radnor grabbed a passing technician by the arm.

‘Switch the air conditioning to expel!’

The man ran to a set of wall controls. The faint hum of the air conditioning changed its note, and after a minute or so the clouds of smoke started to disperse, sucked through the air-conditioning grilles set high into the walls.

‘It seems to be clearing,’ gasped Eldred. ‘What was that thing?’ He went over to the cubicle to examine the remains of the pod.

‘Careful,’ warned Radnor.

‘It’s all right, it’s all shrivelled up.’ He picked up the remaining scraps of casing, made of some tough vegetable substance. ‘Looks harmless enough now.’

Radnor summoned a couple of technicians. ‘Get Brent’s body over to the medical wing. I want a full autopsy.’ As the body was carried away he crossed over to Professor Eldred, who was still examining what was left of the pod.

‘What do you make of it?’

‘Never seen anything like it before. Have you?’

‘Never. It looked like some kind of seed pod. Why did it explode like that?’

‘Well, some plants reproduce that way,’ said Eldred.

‘The pods explode and spread the seeds.’

Radnor frowned. ‘All that thing spread was some kind of smoke.’

‘Or a cloud of seeds or spores so fine that they looked like smoke,’ said Eldred. ‘A cloud which has now been dispelled into the air of London...’

Fewsham looked up from the T-Mat controls. ‘That’s Ottawa. Where next?’

‘Oslo,’ hissed Slaar. He took a pod from the main container and placed it on its stand within the T-Mat cubicle. ‘Prepare to despatch.’

Slaar stepped back. On his orders, Fewsham operated the controls, the booth lit up and the seed pod vanished.

Slaar placed another seed pod in the booth. ‘Hamburg!’ he commanded.

Fewsham gave him an anguished look. ‘But why? Why are we doing this? What are these things?’

‘Hamburg,’ repeated Slaar impassively. ‘Prepare to despatch! Despatch!’

‘Hold this for a moment, will you Zoe?’ asked Miss Kelly, holding out a connecting circuit from one of the solar reflectors.

‘What are you doing?’

‘Some of the reflector circuits burnt out when we destroyed that creature. I’m trying to repair them.’

Zoe held the circuit. Miss Kelly worked on the reflector for a while, then took the circuit from her and replaced it.

‘That ought to do it.’

‘Are the others all right?’

Miss Kelly began checking the other reflectors. ‘I think so. Let’s hope it’ll all work again though!’

Zoe shuddered at the memory of the death throes of the blazing Ice Warrior. ‘Let’s hope we don’t need it!’

She looked at the open hatch. Jamie and Phipps had vanished through it on their mission quite some time ago.

‘It doesn’t seem to be getting any warmer.’

Miss Kelly looked up from her work. ‘I doubt if they’d had time to reach the heating controls yet.’

‘And what happens when they do? The heating controls are in the main control room – and so are the Ice Warriors.’

After what seemed like an endless time crawling along narrow maintenance tunnels, Jamie and Phipps reached the section that gave on to the main control room. They peered through the mesh of the metal grille, and watched for a while as Slaar put pod after pod into the T-Mat booth, and Fewsham despatched the pods to one city after another.

‘What are they doing?’ whispered Jamie.

‘No idea. Sending something by T-Mat, obviously...’

‘Who’s that helping them?’

Phipps looked at the slight figure huddled in the control chair and said grimly ‘Fewsham!’

‘Can you see the Doctor anywhere?’ asked Jamie.

Phipps peered through the grille, but his restricted view didn’t include the floor. ‘No sign of him. I wonder what it is they’re sending?’

Radnor and Eldred listened as the computer voice recounted the arrival of a seed pod in New York, causing the death of several technicians. It was only the latest of many such accounts to come through.

‘Another one,’ said Radnor grimly. ‘How many does that make?’

Eldred checked a list. ‘Sixteen T-Mat Reception Centres so far.’

‘And how many deaths?’

‘Brent here, those men in New York, two in Berlin... It must be a dozen or more. But those things can’t have been sent just to kill a few handful of people at random!’

‘Why else, then?’

‘I don’t know.’ Eldred studied his list again. ‘London, Ottawa, Oslo, Hamburg, Berlin, Paris, New York..’

‘All major population centres,’ suggested Radnor.

‘Yes, but is that all they’ve got in common?’

Before Radnor could answer, a technician entered carrying a plastic folder. He handed it to Radnor, who took it and studied the papers inside with an air of mounting astonishment.

Eldred noticed his reaction. 'What is it?'

'The autopsy report on Brent. Apparently he died of oxygen starvation.'

'Impossible. Oxygen starvation would take three or four minutes at the very least. He died instantly.'

Radnor tossed the report aside. 'Exactly. The Medical Unit can't believe it either.'

'Obviously it was that smoke-like substance from the exploded pod that killed them – and now it's been expelled into the outside air. Let's hope dilution with air will reduce its toxic qualities. Otherwise...' Eldred's voice tailed away into a worried silence.

In a park quite close to T-Mat control a cloud of what appeared to be smoke drifted across the frost-rimmed grass.

Some time later, a patch of white foam appeared on the grass. A pod appeared from the centre of the foam-patch, and began swelling with amazing speed.

The sequence of events was being repeated in parks, gardens and patches of open ground all over London – and in cities all over the world.

Slaar watched as one of his Ice Warriors placed the final pod in the cubicle. 'Zurich. Despatch.'

Automatically Fewsham made the necessary adjustments to the controls, the booth lit up, and the pod vanished. It had become routine by now.

This time the Ice Warrior did not return with another pod. Fewsham looked up wearily. 'Is that the last?'

'It may be necessary to send other seed pods later.'

Fewsham looked down at the huddled body of the Doctor, still laying where it had fallen. 'What about him?'

Slaar looked at the body in mild surprise. He had forgotten the Doctor. 'Is he still alive?'

Fewsham knelt by the body. 'He's still breathing.'

'That is unusual,' said Slaar thoughtfully. 'Most humans would be dead by now. Take him to the cubicle.'

'What for?'

'Do as I say,' hissed Slaar.

Fewsham began dragging the Doctor towards the T-Mat booth.

From behind their grille, Jamie and Phipps watched this with some alarm. 'What are they going to do to him?'

whispered Jamie.

'Sssh!' said Phipps, shrugging his shoulders. He was as baffled as Jamie.

Fewsham heaved the inert Doctor on to the floor of the T-Mat booth and closed the door. He looked up at Slaar.

'Now what?'

'Dispose of him.'

‘What do you mean?’

‘Despatch him to a point in space, midway between this Moon and your Earth.’

Fewsham stared at him in horror. Materialised in space with no protection, the Doctor would die instantly and horribly...

Jamie tapped Phipps’s shoulder. ‘We’ve got to rescue him.’

‘We can get to the back of the cubicle,’ said Phipps suddenly. ‘Quickly – along here.’

‘You can’t ask me to destroy a man like that,’ pleaded Fewsham.

There was grim amusement in Slaar’s voice. ‘You despatched the seeds, Fewsham. In so doing, you destroyed your entire species. What is the death of one man compared to that?’

‘No... no...’ whispered Fewsham. ‘What was in those things?’

‘No more questions. Operate the controls.’

‘I can’t,’ sobbed Fewsham.

Slaar studied him thoughtfully. ‘You would prefer to die?’

‘T-Mat is only programmed to despatch to other centres.

I shall have to reprogram the circuits.’

‘Then do so,’ hissed Slaar. ‘At once!’

Reluctantly, Fewsham set to work.

Using tools from Phipps’s little belt-pack, Jamie and Phipps were working with frantic speed, trying to get the back off the T-Mat cubicle that held the Doctor.

‘Are you sure this is the right one?’ asked Jamie.

‘It had better be,’ said Phipps.

There would be no time to try another.

Fewsham, working slowly and reluctantly on his terrible task, looked up to see Slaar looming over him. ‘Please,’

begged Fewsham. ‘Please, don’t make me do this.’

‘Complete the task,’ hissed Slaar emotionlessly.

Fewsham carried on working.

Jamie and Phipps unbolted the panel and lifted it off – but to Jamie’s dismay there was another metal wall beneath it.

‘Interior casing,’ explained Phipps. ‘We’ll get that off soon enough.’

And indeed, the interior panel proved to be fastened with wing-nuts which they were able to unscrew with their fingers.

Fewsham had almost completed his task and was deliberately slowing down.

Somehow Slaar sensed what was going on. ‘Have you reprogrammed the circuit?’

‘Yes – well, almost.’

‘You are wasting time. Despatch him. Now – at once!’

By now Fewsham was totally under Slaar’s control. His hands went out to the despatch lever.

The T-Mat booth lit up.

Fewsham jumped up and ran to look into the booth. It was empty. He turned to Slaar and screamed. 'You've killed him, you've killed him!' Throwing himself into his chair, he collapsed sobbing.

Regarding this display of emotion without the slightest interest, Slaar ordered, 'Prepare to despatch to London.'

'You've killed him,' repeated Fewsham numbly.

Somehow his part in the death of this one man had affected him far more than all the deaths he was supposed to be responsible for back on Earth.

Slaar beckoned to a waiting Ice Warrior. 'The time has come for your mission. Do you understand what you have to do?'

'I understand,' hissed the Ice Warrior.

'You must succeed at all costs.'

The Ice Warrior went and stood in the T-Mat cubicle.

'Transmit to London,' ordered Slaar.

'I need time. I have to reprogram unless you want him to end up like that poor man.'

'You will transmit as soon as you are ready.'

The Doctor, fortunately, had not been projected into space.

Instead he had been dragged to safety by Jamie and Phipps just before Fewsham had transmitted.

Jamie picked the Doctor up – he was surprisingly heavy for such a little chap – and slung him over his shoulder.

'Can you manage him by yourself?' whispered Phipps.

'Aye, I'll manage.'

'Do you remember the way back?'

'I think so.'

'Good. I'll try to get to those heating controls.'

Jamie set off back the way they had come, the Doctor over his shoulder, and Phipps went on down the tunnel.

It became steadily narrower and at last he reached a point where he had to climb a stepladder to a slightly higher level.

More maintenance tunnels followed and then at last the point he was looking for – a grille more or less opposite the heating controls.

It was a simple enough matter to unfasten the grille with the tools from his belt. Very soon the grille was free and Phipps lifted it down.

To his delight Phipps found out that his estimates of distance and direction had been perfect.

He was in a sort of annexe to the Control centre and opposite him set into the wall, were the heating controls: a number of spoked wheels set into the wall.

He was in the right place – but everything else was terribly wrong.

For one thing, there were two Ice Warriors, apparently guarding the controls. For another, the grille was far too small for him to get through.

Back on Earth, the strange white foam was spreading everywhere, huge bubbling patches of it covering every possible scrap of open ground.

Each patch of foam produced seed pods, each seed pod burst and sent out more spore clouds, which produced more foam, which produced more seed pods...

So rapid was the progression that it almost seemed as if London might soon vanish under a sea of foam.

And the pattern was being repeated all over the world.

The Invader

Radnor and Eldred were listening to yet another report from the computer.

‘Reports have now been received concerning the deaths of T-Mat Reception technicians in London, New York and other T-Mat centres. In every case, the cause of death was oxygen starvation...’

‘Reports are now coming in on the appearance of some kind of vegetable blight which is attacking parks and gardens in the metropolis. It takes the form of patches of white foam which reproduce and spread with great rapidity...’

Radnor was in no mood for agricultural problems.

‘Discontinue,’ he snapped, and the voice fell silent.

‘No, wait a minute,’ protested Eldred. ‘I’d like to hear that.’

Radnor sighed. ‘Very well. Continue report!’

The emotionless voice began again: ‘The blight takes the form of a foam which reproduces and spreads with great rapidity. Acres of ground are covered in a very short time...’

Neither man noticed that the T-Mat booth had lit up, and a giant green shape had materialised. Not until the Ice Warrior smashed its way out of the booth with a splintering crash of wood and glass, did anyone realise it was there.

For a moment, Radnor, Eldred and every technician in the control room stood motionless.

The Ice Warrior too stood quite still, as if getting its bearings. Then it began marching steadily towards the door. As the monster moved, the technicians moved too, turning and running in terror.

Radnor stepped forward, feeling he ought to do something, but Eldred gripped his arm. ‘Keep away from it!’ Radnor ran to a console and pressed an alarm signal as the Ice Warrior continued its lumbering path to the door.

Suddenly an armed security guard appeared, barring its way. At the sight of the monster the guard raised his laser rifle and fired. The Ice Warrior withstood the blast unharmed, raised its sonic gun and fired. The security guard fell down dead and the Ice Warrior went on its inexorable way.

As it left the control room and moved into the corridor there came a tremendous outcry, shouts of warning, yells of alarm, the staccato crashing of blaster fire and the weird note of the sonic gun. Then silence.

Radnor looked cautiously into the corridor. A horrifying sight met his eyes. The corridor was strewn with bodies, twisted and crumpled corpses on every side.

White-faced and shaken, Radnor came back into the room. ‘It’s killed the guards, Eldred,’ he moaned. ‘It’s killed them all.’

Fewsham sat slumped at the T-Mat console, guarded by two Ice Warriors.

‘I shall return shortly,’ said Slaar. ‘You will remain here.’

Slaar summoned one of the Ice Warriors. ‘Have the escaped humans been found?’ he asked.

‘We are still searching for them, Commander,’ came the reply.

‘Go and give orders to intensify the search. These humans must be found and destroyed.’

As the Ice Warrior moved away, Slaar turned to the remaining one, and indicated Fewsham: ‘Guard him.’

Breathing normally but still unconscious, the Doctor lay stretched out on an improvised bunk in the storeroom.

Miss Kelly was giving him some water from a plastic container with a built-in straw. The Doctor sipped a little and muttered something, but showed no sign of regaining consciousness.

‘How is he?’ asked Zoe.

‘Better. I think the water helped.’

Despite his long and tiring journey lugging the Doctor back to comparative safety, Jamie was ready for action again. He tapped Phipps on the shoulder. ‘We’d better get back. We’ve still got to get at those heating controls.’

Suddenly Phipps realised he hadn’t broken his bad news. ‘It’s no good I’m afraid, Jamie. We’ll never make it.’

‘Why not?’

‘The grille’s too small to get through, and there’s no other way.’

‘Mebbe I could make it?’

Phipps looked at Jamie’s brawny form. ‘Not a hope, Jamie.’

‘How big was this grille?’ asked Zoe cautiously.

Phipps held out his hands a few feet apart – and Zoe stepped easily between them. ‘You see? I could get through.’

‘Och, no, it’s too dangerous, Zoe.’

‘I’m smaller than you are, Jamie – and I’d probably be quieter too!’

‘She’s right, you know,’ said Miss Kelly. ‘She’s the only one who could get through. It’s the logical thing to do.’

‘Thank you, Miss Kelly,’ said Zoe, grateful for the support. She went to the hatch that led to the maintenance tunnels. ‘Well, is anybody going to show me the way?’

‘All right,’ said Phipps wearily. He followed her to the hatch.

The Ice Warrior was moving through a foam-covered stretch of open ground, tramping solidly through the spreading white foam and the bursting seed pods.

It moved in a dead straight line as if drawn by the magnet of some invisible target...

Meanwhile, its whereabouts was being discussed in T-Mat control.

‘It can’t just have vanished,’ protested Eldred.

‘I assure you, Professor,’ said Radnor. ‘The security guards have lost all trace of it.’

‘I wonder what its purpose is..

‘Purpose?’ asked Radnor irritably. ‘What are you talking about?’

‘Surely you can see? It’s all part of the same plan, the attack on T-Mat, the seed pods, now this creature. That thing has a purpose I tell you, and heaven help anyone who gets in its way.’

The towering shape of the Ice Warrior stalked on, crossing a patch of open grassland in the extensive gardens surrounding T-Mat Control.

By now the grassland was almost entirely covered in a great seething sheet of foam.

However, attempts were being made to deal with the problem. Three masked and helmeted technicians, wearing back-packs of chemical spray and carrying pressure hoses, were attacking the foam.

Unfortunately, their efforts were meeting with little success.

The more they attacked the foam the harder it fought back. Indeed, the spray seemed to infuriate it, and it seethed and billowed and flung itself upon its attackers like a living thing, so that a storm of foam was flying about their heads.

Then the Ice Warrior appeared. It stood motionless for a moment, watching the three technicians. Perhaps it saw their attack on the foam as an attack on the cause it served.

Perhaps, as Radnor had implied, it was simply because they were across its line of march.

In any event, the Ice Warrior raised its sonic gun and shot down the nearest technician. As the man screamed and fell, the other two turned round – and saw the Ice Warrior.

They stared at it in horror for a moment. Then it ruthlessly shot them down too, one after the other.

As the Ice Warrior moved on its way, the three bodies were already disappearing into the fast spreading foam.

‘Any trace yet of the alien creature?’ asked Radnor.

‘Report from Security negative,’ said the calm computer voice.

Radnor swung round on Eldred. ‘There – what did I tell you?’

‘Security further reports that cordon round T-Mat complex is unbreached,’ the computer went on.

Eldred sighed. ‘Well, at least we know it’s still in the area.’

The computer voice spoke again. ‘Urgent message for Commander Radnor. The bodies of three technicians have been found in T-Mat grounds.’

Zoe and Phipps had crawled along the maintenance tunnels until they reached a junction.

Zoe looked expectantly at Phipps. ‘Well, which way now?’

Phipps looked round indecisively. ‘I’m not sure,’ he said miserably.

‘But you *must* know. You’ve taken Jamie once already.’

‘Yes, I know. But this time I just can’t seem to remember.’

‘But surely...’ began Zoe impatiently.

‘Look, I can’t remember, I tell you. My mind seems to have gone blank. Suddenly all these tunnels look alike.’

Zoe looked worriedly at him. There had been a tinge of hysteria in his voice, something very odd in the calm, unflappable Phipps. ‘Are you sure you’re all right?’ she asked.

Her words triggered off another outburst.

‘All right? Oh yes, I’m fine. I see most of my friends killed, I’m being hunted by monsters...’

‘If you go on shouting like that,’ said Zoe severely,
‘you’ll be caught and killed by monsters. And so will I!’
Phipps drew a deep breath. ‘I’m sorry, Zoe. Don’t know what’s the matter with me.’

‘I do. Nervous exhaustion and a slight touch of claustrophobia. We’d better rest for a bit.’

‘Yes, all right,’ said Phipps gratefully. He slumped back against the tunnel wall, eyes closed.

Zoe looked sympathetically at him. She should have remembered, she thought. Everyone has their breaking point – and sometimes it’s harder for those with a reputation for being totally dependable...

All the same, if Phipps didn’t soon remember where they were – well, they’d be in real trouble...

Radnor and Eldred were still waiting for news of the Ice Warrior.

‘I tell you, that creature came here for some purpose,’
grumbled Eldred. ‘It must be making for somewhere in this area.’

‘Urgent message,’ said the computer voice again.

‘Contact established with security guard who is observing alien.’

‘Relay his report direct,’ ordered Radnor.

The security guard was crouched, half-concealed, behind a tree, watching the Ice Warrior as it moved through a lightly wooded area.

He spoke into his portable communications unit.

‘Report to Central control. The creature is entering the East Compound. I repeat, the East Compound..

Suddenly the Ice Warrior stopped moving. It stood for a moment, scanning the surrounding area, the great ridged head swinging to and fro.

The security guard stood very still – but not still enough. Somehow the Ice Warrior located him, half-hidden behind his tree. It raised its hand.

The security guard’s last thought was that the creature didn’t seem to be armed. It was as if it was simply pointing at him. Unnerved he tried to run – and the impact of the Ice Warrior’s built-in sonic weapon smashed him to the ground.

The Ice Warrior moved on

Radnor’s voice came faintly from the little communications unit which had fallen from the dead man’s hand: ‘Report! What has happened? Report!’

‘Security guard has ceased transmission,’ reported the computer voice.

‘Tell security I want an armed patrol on the spot without delay. Relay news of *any* further sightings to me, here, top priority!’

‘You’re only going to lose more security guards,’ warned Eldred.

‘I can’t just let the creature run round loose, can I?’

‘*Can* you stop it? Do we know how it can be stopped?’

Blasters are no good we’ve seen that for ourselves...

As he spoke Eldred was staring broodily at the great illuminated world map on the wall.

‘New York, Ottawa, London, Paris, Hamburg, Berlin, Oslo... All the places where the seed pods have arrived.’

‘So?’

‘Don’t you see? Cold climates, the Northern Hemisphere. In every one of those cities it’s winter, just as it is here.’

‘Well?’ Radnor was losing patience.

‘Why haven’t the pods arrived in any warm areas?’

The computer voice started up again. ‘Situation report.

Continued breakdown of T-Mat has caused cessation of all world transport and distribution. Total breakdown of social order predicted. Emergency measures proving inadequate – ’

‘Discontinue!’ shouted Radnor, cutting off the flow of useless and depressing information.

‘Incoming data will be recorded,’ said the computer, having the last word.

Eldred shook his head. ‘I suppose the emergency measures may still save a few people...’

‘What’s the good of that?’ said Radnor hopelessly. ‘With all food supplies dislocated we’re going to lose millions.’

‘We may lose most of the world’s population before they’ve finished with us,’ said Eldred gloomily.

‘They?’

‘That creature is only the first. We’re going to be invaded.’

Somewhere outside the Ice Warrior stalked on. By now it was getting very close to its target.

Soon it would carry out its mission.

Jamie was standing by the hatch that led to the maintenance tunnels, listening hard, while Miss Kelly completed her checking of the solar reflector booby trap.

‘Any sign of them, Jamie?’

‘No.’

‘They seem to have been gone ages. They can’t have reached the heating controls yet, though. The temperature’s exactly the same.’

Jamie had always hated waiting about, and his patience was wearing thin. ‘Och, I’m going after them...’

Miss Kelly held him back. ‘No, Jamie. Our job’s to act as rearguard in case something goes wrong.’

‘Och, a fine lot of use we are!’

‘We’re not totally helpless, you know.’

Jamie looked sceptically at the booby trap. ‘Is that thing working again then?’

‘I hope so. It’s all a bit makeshift to be honest.’

Losing interest, Jamie wandered back to the hatchway.

‘What’s keeping them? Where are they?’

‘I think we ought to go on,’ said Zoe brightly.

Phipps, still slumped against the wall, opened his eyes.

‘Yes. All right.’

‘Do you remember the way now?’

He looked round, then shook his head. ‘No, it’s no good.

Maybe we’d better toss up for it.’

‘No,’ said Zoe suddenly. ‘We can do better than that. We can work it out.’

‘How?’

‘These maintenance tunnels run parallel with the main corridors, don’t they?’

‘More or less, but...’

‘Well, I’ve seen a map of the Moonbase. The Doctor had it on the rocket.’

‘You can’t possibly remember...’

‘Oh yes I can,’ said Zoe. ‘I think!’ she added hopefully.

Summoning up her powers of total recall, she closed her eyes and saw the map of the Moonbase in the Doctor’s hand. ‘Main corridor there. Junctions there and there. We went, left, left, right and left... it’s... that one!’ She pointed to the left hand junction.

Phipps looked doubtful. ‘Didn’t you and Jamie get lost on the way to the storeroom?’

‘Only temporarily. I found the way eventually.’

‘Well, you’d better be right this time.’

Zoe set off down the left hand junction.

Phipps scrambled after her, hoping desperately that she was right.

As it happened, she was, and they eventually reached the grille that gave out on to the heating controls.

Unfortunately, there was still an Ice Warrior on guard.

‘How long’s it going to stand there?’ whispered Zoe.

‘I don’t know,’ Phipps whispered back. ‘But I daren’t touch that grille till it goes...’

‘Look, I’d better see what’s happened to them,’ said Jamie.

‘All right,’ agreed Miss Kelly reluctantly. ‘But be – ‘ she broke off, listening.

It was the sound they most dreaded, the harsh laboured breathing, the heavy footsteps that meant an approaching Ice Warrior.

‘Quick, Jamie, the door!’

Jamie grabbed the crowbar and was about to jam the handles with it when he realised he was too late. The door was already opening.

Still clutching the crowbar, Jamie leaped into hiding to the left of the door. Miss Kelly found a hiding place to the right, where she was within easy reach of the solar power switch.

The door opened, and the Ice Warrior lumbered slowly into the room. He came to the centre, perfectly positioned for the trap.

Jamie waved a frantic signal to Miss Kelly on the other side of the room. She pulled the power lever. Nothing happened.

She switched it off, and then on again.

Still nothing.

The Ice Warrior spotted the unconscious form of the Doctor on his improvised bunk.

It moved forwards, looming over him, and pulled back the blanket from his face...

The Ice Warrior by the grille started to move slowly away.
'He's moving,' whispered Zoe. 'Quick, the grille!'
Phipps started lifting the already loosened grille aside.

Fewsham sat slumped wearily at the T-Mat control console. Towering over him was an Ice Warrior guard.

Fewsham turned round to face it. 'How much longer must I wait here?' he asked.
'Do not ask questions,' hissed the Ice Warrior.
'But I need food, rest. I haven't had any sleep for...' His voice faltered. '... for hours...'

Fewsham was sitting at an angle and the grille behind which Zoe and Phipps were hiding was directly in his eyeline. He had just seen the grille move.

The Ice Warrior, its back to the grille, had seen nothing, but it could turn at any moment.

Before he realised what he was doing, Fewsham was on his feet, heading for the T-Mat booth.

'What are you doing?' hissed the Ice Warrior.
It trailed suspiciously after him – further away from the grille.
'I have to check the T-Mat booth.'
'You have already made it function properly.'
'I know, but I might have forgotten something.
Everything must be checked...'

'Quick, Zoe, now's our chance,' whispered Phipps. 'The controls are over there. Just turn the main wheel to *full*...'

Phipps lifted the grille completely free, and boosted Zoe through the gap.

It was a tight squeeze, even for her, but she managed to wriggle through. She sidled along the wall towards the heating controls. They were set high in the wall and she had to climb onto a kind of raised dais to reach them. It was a terribly exposed position. Should the Ice Warrior glance her way she would be completely visible...

She reached up to the wheel. It was stiff at first but slowly it responded to her frantic heaving and she swung it round to *full*.

Immediately the nearby temperature gauge began creeping upwards. Zoe turned and ran back across the raised area, taking her first steps towards safety.

She almost made it. Then the Ice Warrior turned and saw her.

'Zoe, look out!' shouted Phipps through the grille.

Instantly the Ice Warrior swung round and shot him down. It turned again, training the sonic gun on Zoe, who was standing like a perfect target on the raised area.

She looked down at Fewsham, who was standing horror-struck just behind the Ice Warrior. 'Help me, can't you?'
she screamed. ' *Help me!*'

The Rescue

For a terrible moment, Zoe thought Fewsham was going to stand and watch her shot down.

Then to both her astonishment and his own, Fewsham leaped from his feet, and hurled himself on the Ice Warrior.

Given the alien's colossal strength it would have been ridiculous even to think of fighting it. All Fewsham could do was climb desperately to the creature's gun-arm and prevent it from actually shooting Zoe, and perhaps give her a chance to escape.

Even in that he almost failed. The Ice Warrior simply swung its massive arm and shook him off, sending him flying across the room.

Fewsham picked himself up and attacked again, leaping on the Ice Warrior's back, clinging desperately to the thick neck.

Once again the creature shook him off, and this time it rounded on him, delivering two savage cuffs, one with its left and one with its right hand, that left Fewsham bruised and half-stunned on the floor.

Moving slowly, as if enjoying the moment, the Ice Warrior swung round on Zoe. Slowly, very slowly, it raised its sonic gun...

Then to the girl's utter amazement, it raised both hands to its head as if in pain, staggered, and then crashed to the ground. Suddenly Zoe realised – it was getting *hot* in the control room. Her plan had worked. Scarcely able to believe she was still alive, Zoe jumped down from the dais and ran to help the battered Fewsham. 'Are you all right?'

Fewsham got painfully to his feet. He stared at Zoe.

'Yes... yes, I am. Who are you? How did you get here?'

'Never mind that,' said Zoe briskly. 'Thank you for helping me. Why did you? I thought you were on their side.'

'Is that what they all think?' asked Fewsham bitterly.

'Well, you have been helping them, haven't you?'

'I had to,' said Fewsham simply. 'Otherwise they'd have killed me.'

Zoe looked down at the unconscious Ice Warrior.

'Where are the rest of them?'

'I think they've gone back to their ship. But they'll be back.' Fewsham grasped her arm. 'We must get away from here.'

'How?'

'I can get you back to Earth. T-Mat is working again.'

'Good! I'll be back to the others and tell them the good news.'

Zoe disappeared through her grille like a rabbit down a hole.

The Ice Warrior in the storeroom was also feeling the effects of the heat.

Seeming to lose interest in the unconscious Doctor it weaved about as if uncertain why it was there. For a moment it seemed as if it might just wander off – then the Doctor woke up.

He propped himself up on one elbow and stared indignantly about him. 'Victoria?' he muttered, then realised he was a bit astray in his companions. 'Jamie? Zoe, where are you?'

To his horror he saw not Jamie or Zoe but an Ice Warrior looming over him. It raised its sonic gun...

The Doctor was just thinking indignantly that this was a particularly rotten way to wake up, when Jamie leaped out of hiding and smashed an iron bar across the Ice Warrior's arm.

In fact he hit the Ice Warrior so hard that the impact knocked the bar from his own hand. Undeterred, Jamie leaped forwards and grappled with the monster. To his angry astonishment it threw him aside like some tiresome child.

While Jamie picked himself up, Miss Kelly leaped in to the attack, and grabbed the Ice Warrior's arm. She too was thrown aside.

But by this time Jamie was on his feet once more.

Gamely he attacked, but this time the Ice Warrior was ready for him.

Two clamp-like hands fastened around his wrists and he was forced inexorably to his knees by a strength that he couldn't even begin to resist.

For a moment the monster glared down at him. Then its grip weakened. It staggered back, and fell to the ground.

The Doctor jumped to his feet, 'Well done, Jamie!'

Jamie climbed to his feet. Miss Kelly was already standing and seemed quite unhurt. 'Are you all right, Doctor?' she asked.

'Oh, I think so. I'm a bit dizzy. It's so hot in here.'

Jamie nodded towards the unconscious Ice Warrior.

'Aye, lucky for us! Zoe and Phipps managed to turn the heating on, just in time.'

'Where are they now?' asked the Doctor.

'In the maintenance tunnels,' said Miss Kelly - at which point Zoe popped out of the open hatchway.

The Doctor hugged her delightedly. 'Zoe, my dear!'

Zoe hugged him back enthusiastically. 'Doctor! Are you all right?'

'Yes, yes, I think so.'

'Where's Phipps?' asked Jamie.

Zoe's face fell. 'Dead, I'm afraid. The Ice Warrior killed him.'

Miss Kelly looked puzzled. 'How did you escape?'

'The other man helped me.'

'Fewsham?' said Miss Kelly unbelievably. 'I thought he was working for them.'

'Well, he saved my life. He attacked an Ice Warrior when it was going to shoot me.'

'That doesn't sound much like Fewsham!'

'And he's got T-Mat going again,' said Zoe.

'Do I gather we can now get back to Earth?' asked the Doctor.

Zoe nodded. 'I think so.'

'Then let's not waste any more time,' said Miss Kelly.

'Come on.'

They hurried away.

Back on Earth Commander Radnor had new trouble to deal with. Putting down his internal phone he said, 'That's all we need!'

Eldred had been studying the world map, now dotted with symbols signifying famine points caused by the T-Mat breakdown and others marking the arrival of the mysterious seed pods. 'What's the matter?'

'Sir John Gregson's here. United Nations Pleni-potentiary, Minister with Special Responsibility for T-Mat...'

Eldred chuckled. 'In other words, your boss?'

Before Radnor could reply Gregson strode briskly into the room.

Gregson did everything briskly, since he was the type who confused activity with efficiency. The thing was, in his view, to be seen to be doing something – it didn't much matter what.

He was a slight, fussy, balding man, and those who were forced to work with him said he could turn a difficulty into a disaster in record time.

'I've read your report, Radnor, can't make head or tail of it.' He stared at Eldred. 'Who's this?'

'Professor Eldred, sir, he's been assisting us.'

Granting Eldred a brief nod, Gregson said, 'Now then, this T-Mat business... What's the position now?'

'Still no contact with Moonbase, sir.'

'And what are you doing about it?'

Radnor swallowed hard. 'We've managed to get some people up there, sir.'

'How did you do that without T-Mat?'

'By rocket, sir. Professor Eldred's an expert on rocketry.'

'What happened to the rocket?'

'Difficult to say, sir. We lost contact soon after take-off.'

'Is that all you've done?'

'My Chief Technician, Gia Kelly, has also gone to Moonbase.'

Gregson sniffed. 'More rockets?'

'No, sir, she went by T-Mat.'

'But T-Mat isn't working...'

'It started functioning again, briefly. Miss Kelly T-Matted to the base with a repair crew.'

'Have you had a full report from her?'

'No, Sir James,' admitted Radnor wearily. 'As soon as they'd left, T-Mat ceased to function again.'

Gregson gave a snort of exasperation. 'This is all quite ridiculous. T-Mat out of action, and now an outbreak of some kind of crop blight... Not to mention these incredible stories about some kind of monster on the loose...'

'We think it's all connected, sir,' said Radnor desperately.

Gregson didn't listen: he never did. 'What's the latest news on this creature?'

'There isn't any,' said Eldred drily. 'It seems to have disappeared completely.' He pointed to a wall map of the immediate area. 'The last actual sighting was somewhere near the Weather Bureau...'

The Ice Warrior strode through the fast-spreading foam to the white-domed buildings of the Weather Control Bureau.

Weather Control had been established for so many years now that it was taken completely for granted. Perfectly predictable; spring, summer, autumn and winter followed each other in due season, with weather always appropriate for the time of year and the needs of farmers, holidaymakers, and the rest of the population.

No special guard had been placed on the Weather Bureau during the emergency. It simply hadn't occurred to anyone that an enemy would find the place of any interest.

But this inconspicuous little complex was the sole target of this Ice Warrior's single-handed invasion, and a vital factor in the Martian plan to conquer the Earth.

The Ice Warrior moved through the gates and the empty reception area and into the main control room.

Weather control was largely automated and only two or three technicians were needed to tend to the complex array of quietly humming machinery. This, of course, made the Ice Warrior's task much easier. It simply killed the technicians, one by one, as it came across them.

That taken care of, it surveyed the room, looking for the one vital piece of equipment it had come to destroy. This was the Weather Control Unit, the hub of the whole installation.

The Ice Warrior studied the complex console and made a number of carefully planned settings to the controls.

When they were locked in, it raised its sonic gun and fused the console into a mass of twisted metal and plastic.

Now the settings were unchangeable.

Its task completed, the Ice Warrior settled itself to wait...

'I *had* to help them,' said Fewsham pathetically. 'Otherwise they'd have killed me.'

Miss Kelly said severely. 'All right, Fewsham, there'll be a full enquiry back on Earth; tell them. We've no more time to waste here, we must T-Mat back to Earth immediately.'

'If we are all going,' said the Doctor mildly, 'who is going to despatch us?'

'Oh, there's a way of doing that,' said Fewsham hurriedly. 'This is a time switch: it delays transportation by twelve seconds.'

'How ingenious!'

'I'll despatch you, and follow using the time switch,' said Fewsham.

'Right,' said the Doctor happily. 'Come along Jamie, Zoe... This should be rather fun!'

Miss Kelly lingered to talk to Fewsham. 'I thought that time switch was listed as inoperable on the maintenance reports?'

'It was. But it was a very minor fault and we repaired it.'

He operated controls, the T-Mat booth lit up, and the Doctor, Jamie and Zoe faded away.

Fewsham waved Miss Kelly towards the booth. 'In you get Miss Kelly. I'll set the switch. You'd better hurry – the Ice Warriors could return at any moment.'

Giving him a dubious look, she crossed over to the booth and got inside.

Immediately, Fewsham's hands became busy on the controls...

‘I find T-Mat travel rather disappointing,’ said the Doctor as he ambled into T-Mat Reception on Earth. ‘There’s no sensation at all!’

Radnor jumped to his feet as the Doctor and his companions appeared. ‘Where have you been?’ he demanded indignantly. ‘What have you been up to all this time? And where’s Miss Kelly?’

This last question, at least, was answered when the T-Mat booth lit up again and Miss Kelly marched out. The answers to Radnor’s other questions were a little more complicated.

Radnor tried again. ‘Miss Kelly, what’s happening up there?’

‘Would somebody kindly tell me what’s happening down here?’ said Gregson waspishly. He looked at the Doctor, Jamie and Zoe, at Professor Eldred and Miss Kelly, and asked pathetically, ‘Who are all these people? Is T-Mat working or isn’t it?’

Radnor and Professor Eldred both started bombarding the Doctor with questions, both speaking at the same time.

The Doctor held up his hands beseechingly. ‘Please, gentlemen! Let us try one question at a time, shall we?’

Eldred refused to wait. ‘Doctor, did you know there’s been some kind of an alien creature down here?’

‘An Ice Warrior here?’ Jamie was astonished.

‘I’m not in the least surprised, Jamie,’ said the Doctor.

He raised his voice. ‘Gentlemen, these aliens – Martians, Ice Warriors – have taken over the whole of your Moonbase.’

‘What about the crew?’ asked Radnor.

Miss Kelly said, ‘All dead – except Fewsham.’

‘You left him there?’ asked Radnor in amazement. Miss Kelly frowned. ‘He said he’d follow me, using the time switch but...’

She went to a computer screen and punched in a request for information. She studied the data on the screen. ‘I thought so. The time switch is still out of order.’

‘But Mr Fewsham distinctly said he’d repaired it,’ said the Doctor.

Miss Kelly said, ‘Well, he was lying.’

Radnor was totally baffled. ‘Lying? Why?’

Miss Kelly’s mind was already made up. ‘He’s obviously working for the aliens.’

‘Perhaps,’ said the Doctor mildly. ‘But then – why did he let us escape?’

12

The Renegade

Fewsham stood alone in the centre of the empty Moonbase control room, looking at the T-Mat cubicle that had taken the others back to Earth.

He was now the only human alive on the base.

He heard deep laboured hissing breathing, hurried to his seat and slumped down as if unconscious.

Through half-closed lids he saw Slaar stagger into the control room, every step taken with tremendous effort, as he struggled against the oppressive heat.

Slaar lurched over to the heating controls and reached up and spun the wheel to off. He leaned against the wall, gasping as the temperature began to fall.

Fewsham gave an artistic groan and 'recovered' consciousness, rubbing his head.

He staggered towards Slaar who loomed over him, once again his old arrogant self. 'What has happened here?'

'It was the others,' moaned Fewsham. 'They got in through the grille and turned up the heating.'

'Where are they now?'

'They went back to Earth by T-Mat.'

'And you? Why did you not go with them?'

'I refused. That's when they attacked me!'

'Why did you refuse?'

'After all the help I've given you? What do you think would happen to me back on Earth. I'd be executed as a traitor.'

'So? You think you will live longer by staying here?'

Fewsham didn't answer and Slaar went on. 'You value your life. That is good. You will live – if you help us when the invasion fleet arrives.'

'You're going to invade Earth?'

'No. Our Warriors will land here on the Moon. When the seed pods have done their work on Earth, then it will be time for the second stage of our plan.'

Exercising his usual talent for taking charge without really trying, the Doctor was holding forth to an enraptured little audience. 'But don't you see, gentlemen, the invasion of the moon, the taking-over of T-Mat, the seed pods, the arrival of that Ice Warrior here – it's all part of the same plan.'

'Plan? What plan?' asked Radnor.

'All these incidents seem quite unrelated,' argued Gregson. 'This fungus everywhere – what's that got to do with it?'

'I don't know yet.' The Doctor turned to Radnor. 'What do your scientific people make of this fungus?'

'Only that it seems to be indestructible,' said Radnor ruefully. 'We've attacked it in every possible way, but without success.'

'Have you tried to *understand* it?'

‘Are you suggesting we should try to psycho-analyse it, Doctor?’ sneered Gregson.

‘I’m merely suggested that instead of trying to destroy it, we must find out its composition, and its purpose.’

‘There’s a laboratory attached to my workshop,’ said Eldred. ‘You’re welcome to make use of that.’

‘Thank you,’ said the Doctor. ‘Now, I must obtain a sample of the fungus.’

‘No problem about that, Doctor,’ said Radnor. ‘The Complex gardens are full of the stuff.’

‘Then the sooner I get started the better.’

‘Come with me, Doctor,’ suggested Professor Eldred.

‘I’ll get some equipment for you...’

As they moved towards the door Radnor called, ‘Be careful, Doctor, those pod things are deadly.’

‘I’ve already had some experience of them, Commander Radnor. I’ll be careful, I promise.’

The Doctor and Eldred hurried out, and Gregson beckoned Radnor over to him. ‘Commander Radnor, who is that man – not Eldred, the other one?’

Radnor sighed. ‘It’s rather a long and complicated story, Sir James. You see when we arrived at the space museum...’

Jamie and Zoe had been provided with fruit and cordials and meanwhile sat drinking and chatting to Miss Kelly.

‘Miss Kelly,’ said Zoe. ‘Why do you think Fewsham decided to stay on the Moon?’

‘Pretty obvious. He was afraid to come back here and face an enquiry.’

‘And he wasn’t afraid to stay up there with the Ice Warriors?’ Zoe shook her head wonderingly. ‘Given the chance, I know which one I’d rather face.’

‘Well, I’ve got no time to worry about Fewsham. I’ve got to find some way of getting T-Mat operational again.’

‘I thought it was working now?’

‘It’s capable of working, but it happens to be controlled from the Moon. In present circumstances we’ve got to find a way of controlling it from Earth.’

Zoe’s scientific interest was aroused. ‘Is that possible?’

Surely you need the Moon as a relay?’

‘There might be a way of using some other kind of relay,’ said Miss Kelly mysteriously. ‘I must have a word with Commander Radnor.’

She went off to button-hole Radnor, leaving Jamie and Zoe alone.

Jamie was looking worried. ‘Hey, Zoe, do you reckon the Doctor knows what he’s doing, messing about with that foam stuff?’

‘He’ll be all right, Jamie. He knows the dangers now, so he’ll be careful.’

‘Aye, well, I hope so.’ Jamie slurped the last of his fruit cordial. It was obvious from his worried face that he was far from being reassured.

It was as well for Jamie’s peace of mind that he couldn’t see the Doctor at that precise moment.

Provided by Eldred with a large glass jar with a cork stopper, the Doctor, full of scientific enthusiasm, had rushed off to get hold of his fungus specimen, scorning Eldred's suggestion that he wait for the arrival of some promised protective clothing.

Armed with nothing more effective than a very large spotted handkerchief tied over his nose and mouth, the Doctor was heading for the middle of a particularly fine patch of foam.

At the point where the foam was thickest, he bent down and started scooping foam into his jar. The foam was light and fluffy, hard to deal with, and the Doctor, absorbed in trying to get as much into the jar as possible, failed to notice that a particularly large pod was swelling just under his nose.

Failed to notice, that is, until the pod suddenly swelled up to the size of a beach ball and then burst, sending out the usual cloud of spores.

With a yell of alarm, the Doctor leaped back, coughing and spluttering into his handkerchief-mask. His Time Lord constitution was much more resilient than that of any human, but his previous experience with the seed pod had been a very unpleasant one and he wasn't keen to repeat it. Suddenly there were more pods, swelling and exploding all around him. Scooping up some more foam into his jar, the Doctor stoppered it and ran for his life...

Miss Kelly was expounding her scheme to Gregson and Radnor. To her surprise, it was being seized upon with enthusiasm.

'You really think it might work?' asked Radnor.

'I'm sure of it,' said Miss Kelly confidently. 'It couldn't be nearly as effective as the Moonbase of course. That handles two million T-Mat channels simultaneously. A satellite could only carry a few thousand.'

'But it would still be enough to help with vital food supplies,' pointed out Gregson. 'And if we sent up more than one...'

Radnor said. 'We won't be able to use the normal communications satellites, surely? They're not programmed for T-Mat.'

'No, no,' said Miss Kelly impatiently. 'We'd have to send up special satellites.'

Zoe and Jamie had wandered over to listen. 'That would mean using rockets, wouldn't it?' asked Zoe. 'I thought no-one used them these days.'

'Not manned rockets, no,' explained Miss Kelly.

'But we still send up satellites for communications.'

'How soon could you get one up?' asked Radnor.

Miss Kelly said thoughtfully, 'Well, I don't know...' She looked meaningfully at Sir James Gregson. 'Of course, if it were to be given top priority...'

The Doctor peered thoughtfully through the micro-scope at a seething mass of cells. He was studying a prepared specimen of the mysterious foam. 'Well, it's alive, very much alive, organic... Definitely a fungoid composition...'

They were in the cluttered little laboratory adjoining Eldred's space museum. The Doctor picked up a model from the bench. 'You're sure this is an accurate representation of the foam's molecular structure, Professor Eldred?'

'As far as I can make it so, it is.'

The doctor studied the complicated model absorbedly.

‘A molecule of five atoms which absorbs oxygen. You know, a complete blanket of this stuff could reduce the oxygen content of the Earth’s atmosphere quite drastically.’

‘According to my calculations,’ said Eldred. ‘It would reduce it to one twentieth normal.’

‘An atmosphere which would make Earth uninhabitable for the human race – and exactly like the atmosphere of Mars.’

No wonder the Martians had sent seed pods rather than soldiers, thought the Doctor. They planned to remake the Earth to their own needs and desires – wiping out the human race in the process.

He turned to look at the remnant of his fungus specimen. It was seething and bubbling in its container on a bench at the back of the laboratory.

‘Look at that,’ said the Doctor, almost admiringly.

‘Even without vegetation to feed on, it’s still active.’

Suddenly the rounded shape of a seed pod emerged from the seething foam.

‘Look out,’ shouted Eldred. ‘If that thing explodes in here we could be killed.’

Eldred headed for the door but the Doctor hung back. It offended his dignity as a scientist to be chased out of the laboratory by a seed pod. ‘There must be some way of destroying it, with all these chemicals you have here...’

The Doctor went to a rack holding phials of various chemicals, which Eldred had assembled to test against the fungus. The Doctor snatched up a phial marked *Hydrochloric acid*. He tipped it over the seed pod which continued swelling, quite unaffected.

The Doctor grabbed a phial of sulphuric acid. There was the same lack of result. The Doctor reached for another phial, this time of nitric acid. He tipped it over the pod and still the pod went on growing.

‘It’s no use, Doctor,’ called Eldred. ‘Come away before it’s too late.’

In desperation, the Doctor snatched up a glass jug filled with a colourless fluid and tipped that over the swelling pod.

The result was extraordinary. In a matter of seconds the seed pod stopped growing. It began to wither and shrink and, seconds later, it disappeared into the foam.

Eldred came slowly back into the laboratory. ‘You’ve done it, Doctor! What was it? What did you throw on it?’

The Doctor sniffed the jug. He ran his finger round the rim and licked it. Then, beaming, he held the jug out to Eldred.

Professor Eldred too sniffed the jug. Then he looked up at the Doctor, a wide smile spreading over his face.

Jamie and Zoe were listening to yet another situation report from the computer. ‘Extensive search by security forces has revealed no trace of the alien creature.’

‘So,’ said Jamie. ‘That Ice Warrior’s still wandering around somewhere.’

‘Why did they only send one of them?’ wondered Zoe.

‘Perhaps he’s supposed to report back somehow?’

Suddenly the light above a nearby monitor screen began flashing a signal. The Doctor’s face appeared. ‘Is Commander Radnor there, please?’

Zoe went up to the visiphone.

‘Hullo, Zoe,’ said the Doctor delightedly. ‘Is Commander Radnor there?’

‘No, they’ve all gone off somewhere.’

‘I see. Listen, Zoe, wonderful news. We’ve found a way to destroy the fungus!’

‘What is it?’

‘Water! Ordinary water!’

‘But surely, Doctor – ‘

‘No time to explain now, Zoe. Now listen, apparently there’s a Weather Control Bureau somewhere near here. I need to get a message to them.’

‘Can’t you reach them on the visiphone?’

‘No, I’ve tried, they’re not answering, or it’s out of order or something.’

‘What do you want me to do, Doctor?’

‘Get hold of Commander Radnor and tell him what we’ve discovered. He’s to contact the Weather Control people and tell them to make it rain – as much rain as possible all over the country. That’ll settle the fungus!’

‘All right, Doctor, I’ll tell him right away.’

‘Splendid. Professor Eldred and I are on our way back now. Goodbye, Zoe!’

‘But Doctor, suppose – ‘

Zoe was too late. The Doctor had gone.

‘How do we get hold of Commander Radnor, then?’

asked Jamie.

Zoe thought for a moment. ‘Simple. We ask the computer.’

Jamie looked at the massive terminal in awe. ‘Do you know how to work it?’

‘Of course I do.’ Zoe studied the keyboard a moment, punched in the instructions and said, ‘Put me in touch with Commander Radnor, please.’

The computer voice hummed back: ‘Commander Radnor currently engaged in top level T-Mat conference with Chief Technician Kelly and Sir James Gregson.’

‘But it’s urgent,’ protested Zoe. ‘I must talk to him at once.’

‘Commander Radnor not available,’ repeated the computer, and Zoe knew there was no use arguing with it.

‘Well, what do we do now then?’ asked Jamie. ‘We’ll just have to go to the Weather Control Bureau ourselves.’

‘We don’t know where it is.’

‘Then we’ll find it. Come on, Jamie.’

She hustled him away.

13

The Sacrifice

Fewsham watched as two Ice Warriors brought a heavy piece of equipment into the control room.

Its base was a ridged metal pillar with a monitor screen built into the centre and its domed top incorporated a complex aerial. He looked up at Slaar. 'What is it?'

'A communication unit from our ship. You are to connect it to the solar batteries.'

Fewsham inspected the upper dome. 'What's this section here for?'

'That does not concern you.'

'I can't connect equipment unless I know its purpose,' said Fewsham calmly.

Slaar studied him suspiciously. Ever since his voluntary decision to remain on the Moonbase, there had been something different about Fewsham. He was no longer perpetually terrified, and seemed almost self-assured.

'The equipment transmits a directional beam,' said Slaar reluctantly.

'A homing device? You'll use it to guide your space fleet onto the Moon?'

'You will not ask questions,' hissed Slaar. 'You will do as you are told.'

Without replying, Fewsham set to work.

Jamie and Zoe were working their way round the edge of the foam filled courtyard in front of the Weather Control Bureau.

Dodging seething foam and exploding pods, they made their way to the main door. To their surprise, they found it standing open.

'We'd better close it behind us,' said Jamie. 'You never know, that Ice Warrior might be prowling round here.'

They went inside the Weather Bureau and Zoe locked the heavy metal door from the inside. 'There, that ought to keep him out.'

They looked around. They were in a brightly lit anteroom with shining walls made of silvery metal.

Everything was cool, peaceful and completely silent. There was nobody in sight.

'Come on,' said Zoe. 'Let's find the main control room.'

There must be somebody in there.'

They found the control room at the end of another long, silent corridor. It was a massive circular room with an upper gallery running around the top. There were brightly-lit wall maps and charts, lights flashing on complex control consoles, strangely-shaped pieces of machinery pulsing with power, and everywhere the same eerie silence.

As Zoe had predicted, there was indeed somebody in the control room. A Weather Control technician was lying dead at the foot of the stairs to the upper gallery.

'That's why they didn't answer the visiphone,' said Zoe grimly.

As they explored the control room further, they found two more dead bodies, and came eventually to a central console which had been partially destroyed.

Zoe studied it. 'I bet you this one has something to do with making it rain.'

'Why do you say that?'

‘Don’t you see, Jamie? It’s what the Doctor said. Water – rain! It all makes sense now. The Ice Warriors don’t want it to rain on their fungus!’

Jamie tugged at a fused control lever. ‘Aye, it’s all locked solid...’ Suddenly he broke off. ‘Listen!’

The sound of deep, hissing breathing was breaking the silence – and it was coming towards them.

‘It’s the Ice Warrior,’ whispered Jamie. ‘Hide!’

They ducked out of sight behind the nearest control console.

Peering cautiously from behind it, Jamie saw the massive shape of the Ice Warrior. It was moving towards them.

Fewsham had completed his task and the Ice Warrior communication unit was operational.

An Ice Warrior appeared on the monitor screen. The head, somewhat differently shaped from that of Slaar, seemed to be studded with gleaming jewels and the voice, although aged, was filled with power and authority.

‘Are all the preparations complete?’

Slaar bowed reverently. ‘Yes, Grand Marshal. The seed pods have been delivered to the cities of Earth, and the Moonbase is in our hands.’

‘Excellent. Our fleet is approaching the gravitational field of the Moon. Is all prepared?’

‘Everything is ready. I shall guide your ships in on the homing beam.’

‘Fuel supplies are now at marginal level,’ warned the Grand Marshal. ‘There must be no misjudgement.’

The eyes of Slaar and his Ice Warrior were fastened reverently upon the face of the Grand Marshal, and for the moment Fewsham was quite unobserved.

His hand crept out and activated a control. A light on the video link console began flashing rhythmically.

Cautiously, Fewsham adjusted more controls...

Commander Radnor and Miss Kelly were back in T-Mat Reception, looking eagerly at a monitor screen, which showed a rocket on its pad, ready to be launched.

‘I hope they know what they’re doing,’ said Miss Kelly.

‘It’s been years since anyone sent up a satellite.’

‘Are you sure this is going to work?’ asked Radnor worriedly.

‘Oh yes!’ Miss Kelly’s voice was confident. ‘We’ve even boosted the capacity. Once that satellite is up, T-Mat will be able to handle two thousand channels.’

The Doctor and Professor Eldred bustled into the room, both very pleased with themselves.

‘Hullo, what’s going on?’ asked Eldred eagerly.

‘Someone sending up a rocket?’

Suddenly a second monitor lit up. ‘Look at that!’ said Radnor astonished. ‘What’s happening?’

Miss Kelly leaned forward. ‘That’s Moonbase Control!’

They could see Fewsham, Slaar and an Ice-Warrior guard, all gathered round a piece of Ice Warrior equipment.

‘The sound,’ said the Doctor urgently. ‘Turn it up!’

Miss Kelly adjusted a volume control.

They heard Fewsham say, ‘Shouldn’t we test the directional beam?’

Then Slaar’s voice hissed. ‘It is not necessary.’

Fewsham’s voice was loud, a little stilted as if he wanted to be overheard. ‘But it’s to operate on Moonbase power. I can’t guarantee the pulsing rate will be in phase.’

‘Very well,’ hissed Slaar. ‘Test!’

The little group in T-Mat Control listened in fascination.

The Doctor tapped Radnor’s shoulder. ‘Commander Radnor, we must record this. It’s vital.’

Radnor operated a computer control. ‘The transmission coming in on video link from Moonbase – record it!’

In Moon Control, the Ice Warrior communication device was giving out a complex series of coded bleeps.

‘The device is operating satisfactorily,’ said Slaar. He went to switch it off.

‘Wait a minute,’ said Fewsham hastily. ‘I must recheck these connections... If the power burns them out you won’t be able to guide your fleet to land on the Moon.’

‘There will be no failure.’

Fewsham raised his voice. ‘I realise how important this is. If they overshoot the Moon, they could finish up in orbit around the Sun.’

‘They will not overshoot,’ hissed Slaar angrily. By now he was convinced something was wrong. But what?

‘Of course they won’t overshoot,’ agreed Fewsham, still in that loud artificial-sounding voice. ‘Since their fuel supplies are at marginal level, if anything did go wrong, they might never be able to regain Moon orbit.’

Slaar swung round, scanning the control room suspiciously – and suddenly caught sight of the video link console.

He swung back to Fewsham. ‘The video link is operating. You have betrayed us.’

Fewsham said proudly. ‘Every word has been heard on Earth.’

He knew what would happen now. Unable to bear the consequences of his earlier betrayal, he had stayed on the Moon deliberately, in hope of making amends. His object achieved, he found he could face death unafraid.

‘Kill him,’ hissed Slaar, and the guard fired instantly.

Fewsham’s body twisted and distorted, and he slumped dead over the communication unit.

The watchers in T-Mat Reception looked away in horror.

At a sign from Slaar the guard fired again and the monitor went blank.

A voice from rocket control broke the horrified silence.

‘Countdown beginning. Minus three minutes.’

‘Cancel the launch!’ shouted the Doctor.

Radnor stared at him. ‘What do you mean? Why?’

‘Because we can use that satellite to mislead the Martian Invasion Fleet. Fewsham deliberately let us hear their homing device. We can simulate that signal beam from the satellite.’

Radnor didn't really understand but the Doctor's enthusiasm carried him along. He flicked a switch.

'Commander Radnor to satellite launching site. Top priority. Cancel launch. Repeat, cancel launch.'

'If we can deflect the Martian invasion fleet, most of your troubles will be over,' said the Doctor.

Radnor said, 'Don't forget there's still the fungus everywhere.'

'We've solved that one,' announced Eldred. 'Water destroys it. Plain, ordinary H2O!'

Radnor was delighted. 'Then all we need to do is make it rain!'

'Aren't you doing that already?' asked the Doctor in surprise. 'Haven't you already contacted the Weather Bureau?'

'You've only just told me the news, Doctor!'

'But I sent you a message over an hour ago. Didn't Zoe reach you?'

'An hour ago we were all in conference – unreachable,' said Miss Kelly.

The Doctor thought for a moment. 'I see. Well, knowing Zoe, she probably went straight to the Weather Bureau to tell them herself.'

'I'll check,' said Radnor.

The Doctor watched as Radnor tried to raise the Weather Bureau on the visiphone.

'They don't reply, Doctor.'

'That's what happened to me.'

'Doctor,' said Radnor worriedly. 'The Ice Warrior was last sighted near the Weather Bureau.'

'Oh, no!' said the Doctor, and dashed straight out of the room.

'Doctor, wait,' called Radnor. 'I'll send a security guard.'

But it was too late.

Radnor touched a control. 'Get me Security!'

By the time the Doctor reached the Weather Bureau, the fungus in the courtyard was waist-high. Undeterred the Doctor plunged straight into it, heading for the main door.

The fungus seethed and boiled as if recognising an enemy. Pods swelled up and burst all around him.

Coughing and choking, protected only by his trusty handkerchief over nose and mouth, the Doctor fought his way to the main door. It was locked.

He hammered on it shouting, 'Jamie, Zoe, are you in there?'

The fungus seethed and bubbled, closing in around him.

The Doctor's voice penetrated faintly into the Weather Control Bureau, where Jamie and Zoe crouched in hiding, not daring to move in case the Ice Warrior spotted them.

The Ice Warrior too heard the voice. It turned and lumbered towards the door.

Outside the door the fungus-foam rose higher and higher.

The Doctor turned and saw a huge bank of it looming over him. ‘Oh no!’ he shouted as the foam closed over his head.

14

Trapped!

As the Ice Warrior moved away, Jamie and Zoe slipped out of the inner room and followed cautiously after it, out of the control room and down the corridor towards the anteroom.

Jamie was thinking hard. If the Ice Warrior opened the door and saw the Doctor, it would kill him on sight. So...

Jamie tapped Zoe on the shoulder and whispered in her ear, telling her his plan. Zoe looked horrified.

Ignoring her objections, Jamie shoved her into an alcove. Then he sprinted round in front of the astonished Ice Warrior, and capered up and down, shouting Gaelic insults.

As the sonic gun came up, Jamie ducked round behind the Ice Warrior again, and fled back towards the control room at top speed.

The Ice Warrior swung round, fired once at the retreating figure, missed, and lumbered after it in pursuit –

going straight past Zoe without seeing her.

The way to the door was clear! Zoe sprinted down the corridor; across the anteroom, and wrestled with the door handle. Somehow the door seemed harder to unlock than it had been to lock. As Zoe wrestled with the catch, she could hear the Doctor's cries growing fainter.

At last the lock sprang open and Zoe began sliding back the heavy door. When the gap was wide enough a sort of mobile snowman staggered through. Zoe began closing the door again, and the snowman helped her.

It began brushing itself down, and finally the familiar figure of the Doctor emerged from beneath the foam. 'My goodness, that was a nasty situation!'

Zoe brushed some more foam off him. 'It still is, Doctor! There's an Ice Warrior in here with us.'

The Doctor looked round in alarm. 'Where is it?'

'Chasing Jamie. He drew it off so we could let you in.'

'Then we must help him!'

'Right,' said Zoe. 'They went this way!'

The Ice Warrior was chasing Jamie round the main control complex, firing whenever it caught a glimpse of him. All the sonic blasts had missed – so far.

Zig-zagging wildly, Jamie shot across the control complex and through the door at the far side, slamming and locking it behind him. He ran up some stairs and fled along one of the upper galleries.

Behind him, the Ice Warrior trained its sonic gun on the lock.

Jamie meanwhile dashed along the gallery, down some steps at the far end, along another corridor, round a couple of corners – and straight into the Doctor and Zoe. 'Hello, Doctor!' he cried delightedly.

'Where's the Ice Warrior?' asked Zoe practically. 'I locked it in that room we were hiding in.'

The heard the sound of a sonic blast, followed by heavy breathing and heavier footsteps.

‘I don’t think it’s stayed in there, Jamie,’ said the Doctor thoughtfully.

Zoe spotted an open door along the corridor. Above it were the words *SOLAR ENERGY ROOM*. ‘Look! We could hide in there!’ she suggested.

‘We’d only be trapped again,’ objected Jamie.

‘Ah, but that might be just the place we need,’ said the Doctor, and led the way inside.

They found themselves in a small concrete-lined room with a power console in the corner and shelves of reflectors, solar batteries and other spare parts lining the walls.

The Doctor ran to the console. ‘A solar energy room should have a good strong door-shield. Now, where’s the control?’

He peered at the rows of switches.

‘Is it this one, Doctor?’ asked Jamie. He reached out and flicked a switch and all the lights went out.

‘No, it isn’t Jamie,’ said the Doctor severely. He switched them on again and peered at the console. ‘Oh dear, it must be one of these!’

Zoe heard the hissing breath of the Ice Warrior in the corridor. ‘Hurry, Doctor!’

‘Ah, here it is,’ said the Doctor. ‘The one with shut on it.’

He flicked the switch – just as the Ice Warrior appeared in the open doorway. It raised its gun to fire – and a heavy metal shield slid across the door in front of it.

‘I think that’ll hold him for a while,’ said the Doctor with some satisfaction.

The sound of repeated sonic blasts came from the other side of the shield. ‘I’m not so sure,’ said Jamie. ‘He’s trying to blast his way in!’

‘Now what?’ asked Zoe.

‘Commander Radnor will be sending some security guards,’ said the Doctor confidently.

‘There’ll no’ be much use against an Ice Warrior,’
pointed out Jamie.

Zoe was looking round. ‘When we were on the Moon, Phipps rigged up some kind of booby trap with reflectors.’

The Doctor looked round. ‘Solar energy, yes, of course!’

Let’s see what we can rig up here.’

Jamie pointed to the shield, which was buckling under the effect of the Ice Warrior’s repeated sonic blasts. ‘You’d better get a move on, Doctor. That shield won’t hold out much longer...’

A squad of security guards was just outside the Weather Bureau. Thanks to the Doctor’s discovery, one of their number was equipped with a high pressure water spray, but there was so much foam by now that it was still heavy going.

They reached the main doors, found them locked, and blasted them open. Weapons levelled, they marched confidently into the building. Spreading out, they moved along the corridors, turned a corner – and found themselves facing the Ice Warrior, which had been drawn away from the Doctor’s door by the sound of the door being blasted down.

The two men in the front fired instantly – with no result. The Ice Warrior raised its hand and fired twice, killing them both. The rest of the guards turned and fled.

The Ice Warrior chased them far as the door.

Just outside, the last of the retreating guards turned to fight a rearguard action, blazing away with his laser-pistol.

The Ice Warrior fired once and the guard's body was blasted through the air, dropping back into the creeping foam which soon swallowed his body.

The Doctor soon rigged up power connections to two hand reflectors and stood, one in each hand like an old-time Western gunfighter.

He nodded to Zoe who was at the power switch. 'Ready, Doctor?' asked Jamie.

'Yes. Open the shield!'

'Suppose that thing doesn't work?'

'We shan't know till we try, shall we?' said the Doctor, imperturbably.

The door slid open: the Ice Warrior was nowhere in sight.

'He must be chasing after those security guards,' said Jamie.

'Another moment and we could have destroyed him,'

said the Doctor regretfully. He looked back in the little room. 'There are some reels of high tension power cable in there Jamie. Come on!'

He plunged back into the room. 'Yes, there it is. Now, Zoe, you stay by the power switch, Jamie you pay out the cable, and I'll make the connections.'

In a surprisingly short time they were ready to set off again. It was a clumsy but, with any luck, effective system.

The Doctor walked ahead, a reflector in each hand, while Jamie followed reeling out the power cable.

It was a fairly nerve-wracking walk through the silent corridors. Once the Doctor swung round at an imagined noise and nearly incinerated Jamie.

Suddenly they turned a corner and found themselves facing the Ice Warrior, just returned from seeing the guards off the premises.

'Now, Zoe!' shrieked the Doctor, hoping she was still within earshot. She was. As the Ice Warrior raised its arm to fire, the reflectors in the Doctor's hands began blazing with light.

Carefully the Doctor aimed the beams inwards, so they converged on the approaching Ice Warrior.

Caught in the twin beams, the Ice Warrior went rigid, its body outlined in flame. Suddenly it fell dead at the Doctor's feet.

Grimly the Doctor kept the heat beams on the giant body until it had been seared and charred into nothingness.

'All right, Zoe,' he yelled, and the reflector lights went off.

'No information as yet from Weather Control Bureau,'
droned the computer.

'I'd better get over there,' said Radnor.

He headed for the door, then checked himself as the Doctor's face appeared in the visiphone. 'Hello, T-Mat Reception. This is the Doctor.'

Radnor hurried over. 'There you are, Doctor. What's happening over there?'

'I'm afraid there's been quite a battle but we're back in control. The Ice Warrior was here but we managed to deal with him.'

‘Did the alien do much damage?’

‘I’m just going to see how bad it is. How’s our homing device?’

‘Miss Kelly and Professor Eldred are working on it now.’

‘Good. Well, I’ll get back to you as soon as I can.’

The screen went blank, and Radnor moved over to another screen on the other side of the room where Eldred and Miss Kelly were working on the fake Martian signal for the satellite.

Miss Kelly had a complex assemblage of radiophonic equipment on a stand, the whole linked to a screen. ‘How’s it going?’ asked Radnor.

‘We’re ready to test, Commander.’

‘Very well,’ said Radnor. ‘I’ll play back the recording.’

He touched a control and the steady irregular beeping of the Martian homing signal rang out, while at the same time an intricate wave pattern signal appeared on the screen.

‘Now, let’s see if I can reproduce that,’ said Miss Kelly.

She switched on her apparatus and a beeping signal rang out. But both the signal and the pattern it produced were markedly different from the original.

‘Can’t we get closer than that?’ asked Radnor.

‘We shall, don’t worry!’

Miss Kelly made a few adjustments and switched on again.

This time the signal and the wave pattern on the screen were identical.

‘That’s it,’ said Eldred.

Miss Kelly nodded, satisfied. ‘I’ll lock it to that frequency.’

Eldred looked at her amusedly. ‘Miss Kelly, how are you going to get that device to the rocket without T-Mat?’

‘It just so happens we found a petrol car in another museum,’ Miss Kelly said.

Eldred was immediately fascinated.

‘Really? What make?’

‘No idea. It’s got four wheels and it goes!’ She finished her adjustments and handed the device to a technician.

‘Get this to the rocket immediately.’

‘Will the car be able to make it through the foam?’ asked Eldred.

‘I’ve arranged to have the route hosed clear for it,’ said Radnor. ‘But the only way we can get rid of that foam permanently is with rain – lots of rain!’

The Doctor was studying the ruins of the central console.

‘It’s hopeless, Doctor,’ said Jamie. ‘You’ll never get that thing working again!’

‘Oh, I don’t know, Jamie,’ said the Doctor cheerfully.

‘After all, it’s only the controls he’s damaged, not the real machinery. Maybe we can by-pass the damage. Lend me your knife, will you?’

Jamie pulled his Highlander’s dagger from his belt and passed it over.

The Doctor prised the back off the console and hauled out a tangle of multi-coloured wires. ‘Hmm... It’s just a question of working out what all these mean, you see...’

Slaar was standing before the communication unit, being reproved by the Grand Marshal.

‘You should not have killed him. Who will operate T-Mat?’
‘I have studied the controls, Grand Marshal.’
‘What if the apparatus breaks down?’
‘I can send guards to Earth to bring back more technicians.’
‘Soon all human life on Earth will be extinct.’
‘It takes time for the fungus to remove the oxygen from their atmosphere, Grand Marshal,’ said Slaar respectfully.
‘You must use that time to obtain another human. And this time, do not kill him.’
Slaar bowed his head. ‘Yes, Grand Marshal.’
‘Be prepared to activate the homing beam at our signal!’

Slaar bowed again, and the screen went blank.
Slaar turned to the Ice Warrior guard. ‘Remain here. I shall return to my ship to finalise our invasion plans.’ Slaar stalked away.

‘Now then, Zoe,’ said the Doctor hopefully. ‘Let’s see what happens if I put these two wires together.’
What happened was a bang and a flash.
‘No, I don’t think so,’ said the Doctor thoughtfully.
‘Let’s try these.’ He connected two different wires and a light began flickering on the damaged console.
The Doctor beamed. ‘I rather think that’s connected one rain circuit at least.’
Jamie was peering out of the window.
‘Well, it’s no’ raining yet, Doctor!’
‘Weather control is a very complicated and difficult technology, Jamie. You can’t expect instant results, you know.’
Zoe gave him a rather dubious look. ‘Are you sure you’re getting it right, Doctor?’
‘I think so, Zoe. We must just hope for the best. Well, I must get on; I’ve got another little job to take care of.’
Jamie turned from the window. ‘Have you no’ got enough to do here?’
‘What else is there?’ asked Zoe.
The Doctor said innocently, ‘Oh, nothing really. I just want to make some improvements in my solar energy device...’

On the monitor screen the rocket lifted slowly and majestically off the launch pad and streaked into space.
Radnor, Eldred and Kelly gave a collective sigh of relief.
The Doctor, Jamie and Zoe arrived just in time to see it take off.
‘We should have some nice heavy rain before too long,’
announced the Doctor. He nodded towards the screen. ‘I take it that’s the satellite?’

Eldred nodded. ‘Isn’t it a beautiful sight?’
‘We’ve finished and installed the homing device and it’s working perfectly,’ said Miss Kelly. ‘But even if we’re sending up a false signal, aren’t some of the Martian ships bound to follow the right one?’
‘There isn’t going to be a right one,’ said the Doctor.

‘Only our wrong one. It will deflect the entire Martian space fleet into an orbit around the Sun.’

‘But what about Slaar’s signal?’ asked Zoe.

‘Obviously, that must be shut down.’

‘But how, Doctor?’ asked Eldred.

‘As soon as that satellite is safely in orbit,’ said the Doctor calmly. ‘I shall T-Mat to the Moon and destroy the Martian homing device.’

Signal of Doom

Everyone stared at the Doctor in horror for a moment, then a babble of protest broke out.

Miss Kelly summed up everyone's sentiments. 'It's suicide, Doctor! They'll kill you on sight.'

'Oh, I don't think so,' said the Doctor airily. 'I've rigged up a rather interesting little contraption.'

He turned round, revealing a sort of improvised rucksack on his back, holding the bulky, square shape of a solar battery. From the battery wires ran two small solar reflectors, one in each of the Doctor's hands. He flourished them at Miss Kelly. 'It's a development of the solar energy device poor Mr Phipps used so successfully on the Moon.

I've succeeded in making it portable. As you can see, it's got a solar battery.'

Miss Kelly gave him a sceptical look and activated a large radar screen. Soon a little spot of light could be seen pulsing at its centre. 'Well, there's the satellite. It's in orbit now.'

She flicked another switch, adjusted controls, and soon a familiar beeping pattern filled the room. 'We're picking up the alien's homing signal from the Moon.'

'Then the invasion fleet must be getting nearer,' said the Doctor. 'We've got no time to lose.' He turned to Radnor.

'Now, is everything clear? As soon as I stop *their* signal transmitting, you activate *our* signal from the satellite.'

'We'll be ready, Doctor.'

The Doctor smiled. 'Then I'll be off.'

He marched over to the T-Mat booth.

Zoe ran over to him. 'Doctor, you will be careful, won't you?'

'Don't worry, Zoe. As soon as I've done what I have to do, I'll T-Mat myself back to Earth. Ready, Miss Kelly?'

'But Doctor,' she protested. 'Our control of T-Mat hasn't really been tested since the repair.'

'Then now's the time to test it,' said the Doctor and stepped into the booth.

Miss Kelly went to the T-Mat console.

A few seconds later, the booth lit up and the Doctor faded away...

... and in the Moonbase T-Mat control room, the booth lit up and the Doctor appeared.

Peering through the glass door of the booth he saw at once that there was an Ice Warrior on guard in the control room. Only one, fortunately, and it was turned a little away.

Cautiously the Doctor opened the door of the booth and stepped out. Somehow the faint sound alerted the Ice Warrior. It swung round, raising its sonic gun, but the Doctor was ready and fired first. The twin reflectors blazed fiercely and he trained their converging beams on the Ice Warrior.

Arms flailing wildly, it staggered back, crashed into the wall, and slid down to the floor, quite dead.

The Doctor watched it for a moment. Satisfied that it really was dead, he slid the battery pack from his back and set it down, laying the reflectors beside it. He hurried over to the communications device, and studied it thoughtfully.

Then he took an oddly-shaped tool from his pocket, removed a panel from the back and reached inside. He worked for a moment, and then slid the panel back in place

– just as Slaar and an Ice Warrior guard entered the control room.

The Doctor leaped for his weapon, but it was too late.

The guard's sonic gun was already trained upon him.

The Ice Warrior was clearly about to fire when Slaar hissed, 'No! Do not kill him!' He pointed to the Doctor.

'You – over there!'

The Doctor moved to the centre of the control room.

Slaar studied him for a moment. 'I ordered you to be destroyed.'

'Well, you weren't very successful, were you?'

Slaar looked at the device the Doctor had put down and at the body of the dead Ice Warrior. He turned to the guard. 'That is a weapon. Destroy it.'

The guard fired and the Doctor's gadget was blasted into a lump of fused metal.

'What is your purpose in coming here?' demanded Slaar.

'You don't expect me to tell you that, do you?'

Slaar went to his communications unit. 'The directional beam is still functioning,' he announced triumphantly, indicating the steadily pulsing light in the top.

The Doctor sighed. 'Yes, I'm afraid you were too quick for me.'

Slaar considered for a moment, remembering the Grand Marshal's command to obtain another human.

'Are you capable of operating the T-Mat mechanism?'

'Oh, no, no, no, I couldn't do that,' said the Doctor.

At a signal from Slaar, the Ice Warrior guard held its sonic gun to his head.

'Well, perhaps I could manage to get the hang of it,' said the Doctor hurriedly.

'As long as you can be useful to us you may live,' hissed Slaar. 'But this time there will be no escape. Now, you will familiarise yourself with the T-Mat controls.'

'Oh, thank you very much,' said the Doctor. Sitting down at the T-Mat console he pushed back the sleeves of his baggy frock-coat like a concert pianist about to tackle a spectacular solo.

'You will not touch the controls till I give the order,'

Slaar hissed angrily.

Disappointed the Doctor sat back, like a child who has been told he can look but not touch.

On a monitor next to the radar screen, the undulating line of the satellite's wave pattern was pulsing steadily.

'The satellite's in orbit, and our homing signal is operating perfectly,' said Miss Kelly.

Eldred looked worried. 'We should have waited till the Doctor got back.'

'He told us to transmit as soon as the Moon signal disappeared,' said Radnor. 'Well, it's disappeared.'

'That could be just atmospheric,' grumbled Eldred.

'For all we know they're still transmitting as strongly as ever.'

Zoe said, 'Their signal was strong enough before the Doctor left. He must have succeeded in stopping it.'

'Aye?' said Jamie. 'Then why hasn't he come back?'

The Grand Marshal was once more on the screen. 'We are receiving your homing signal clearly. Soon we shall enter the gravitational field of the Moon.'

'All is prepared, Grand Marshal,' said Slaar proudly. 'As you advised, I have obtained the services of another human to T-Mat our forces to Earth.'

'Excellent. I shall resume transmission only when the landing is imminent.'

The Grand Marshal's face faded and Slaar turned menacingly to the Doctor. 'When our warriors arrive you will T-Mat them to Earth under my direction.'

'Ah, but they haven't arrived yet, have they?' said the Doctor infuriatingly. 'Something might still go wrong.'

Slaar hissed. 'Nothing can go wrong now!'

'Oh, there's many a slip between the cup and the lip,' muttered the Doctor.

Slaar regarded him malevolently. 'If anything does go wrong, you will be the first to die...'

The little group in T-Mat Reception on Earth was studying the big radar screen. Across it moved a myriad of tiny dots: the Ice Warrior war fleet.

'If they're going to alter course, it'll happen any moment now? Zoe peered at the screen. 'Look, the leading one *is* changing course!'

'You're right!' shouted Radnor.

The swarm of little dots began curving round on a fresh course.

'They're all following the satellite signal,' said Eldred exultantly.

'Then the Doctor succeeded,' said Zoe. 'He must have turned off the Martian signal.'

Jamie was worried. 'Aye, but what's happening up there now? Why hasn't the Doctor come back?'

'Don't worry, Jamie,' said Radnor reassuringly. 'I've got a squad of security guards with flame throwers on their way here. As soon as they get here we'll T-Mat them to the Moon.'

Jamie refused to be reassured. 'They may be too late.'

'You'll just have to be patient, boy.'

'Aye, well mebbe I'm sick of being patient,' growled Jamie. He drew Zoe aside. 'Do you think you could operate that T-Mat thing?'

'I think so. Why?'

'I want you to T-Mat me to the Moon.'

'Oh, Jamie, shouldn't you wait?'

'Look,' whispered Jamie. 'Either the Doctor's all right, in which case you needn't worry about me either – or he's in trouble and he needs my help!'

Suddenly the Grand Marshal reappeared on Slaat's screen, this time with panic in his voice. 'Slaat, we are passing between Earth and the Moon. The signal has not led us into the Moon's gravitational field.'

Slaat was baffled. 'That is impossible. Have you lost my signal, Grand Marshal?'

'Your signal is being received clearly, but we are still off course.'

'You are sure your calculations are correct?' asked Slaat.

'All calculations have been checked,' quavered the old voice. 'You have sent us into an orbit close to the Sun.'

'Use your retro-rockets to change course,' said Slaat.

'It is too late. There is now insufficient fuel for manoeuvre.' The picture began to distort and break up.

'You have failed us, Slaat,' wailed the Grand Marshal's voice, now suddenly very feeble. 'We shall all die. We are being drawn into the orbit of the Sun...'

Voice and picture both faded away.

Slaat crossed over to the communications unit. 'This is impossible.' He turned up the power control. Nothing happened. 'The signal. There is no power. It is disconnected, but for the light.' He turned accusingly on the Doctor. '*You did this!*'

'Yes, I did,' said the Doctor steadily. 'That signal carried no further than this control room.'

'But they were receiving my signal.'

'Not *your* signal, Slaat – *ours!*'

'You sent up a signal from Earth?'

'We sent up a satellite – and its signal has sent your fleet into a false orbit.'

'You have destroyed our entire fleet,' said Slaat almost wonderingly. 'The heat of the Sun will kill them.'

The Doctor met Slaat's look, unafraid. 'You tried to destroy an entire world.'

'Earth will still die,' hissed Slaat, clinging to this last revenge. 'The fungus will take the oxygen from your atmosphere.'

'You have failed there, too. We can defeat the fungus – with water!'

Slaat waved to the Ice Warrior. 'Kill him!'

The Ice Warrior trained its gun on the Doctor and was about to fire when Jamie appeared in the T-Mat booth.

'Doctor!' he yelled.

The brief distraction was enough. The Doctor leaped forwards and shoved at the monster's gun-arm, altering its aim.

The Ice Warrior fired – and the blast of sonic energy caught Slaat full in the chest. His body, like those of so many human victims of the Ice Warriors, twisted, distorted, and died.

Jamie dashed across the room to help the Doctor as the confused Ice Warrior tried to take aim at him. The Doctor pulled the power connection point from the homing device, switched the power back on, and thrust the bared points into the Ice Warrior's side. There was a bang and a flash, and the Ice Warrior fell dead, its body smoking.

'Thank you, Jamie,' gasped the Doctor. 'Thank you very much. Now then, we must T-Mat ourselves back to Earth...'

For once the computer's message was actually cheerful.

'Widespread rainfall now occurring throughout the country. Some flooding, but none serious, fungus rapidly disappearing. World shortages rapidly being relieved now T-Mat again operational. Message to Commander Radnor from Security Council: many congratulations.'

'Discontinue,' snapped Radnor embarrassed.

Zoe nudged the Doctor. 'So you really did know what you were doing at the Weather Control Bureau?'

The Doctor looked hurt. 'Of course I did, Zoe.'

'Well, it took long enough to work,' grumbled Jamie.

'The rain seems to be disposing of the fungus well enough,' admitted Radnor. 'Our next job is to get T-Mat fully operational.'

'When Moon Relay is repaired we must check over the equipment and build in safeguards,' insisted Miss Kelly.

'And from now on T-Mat must be entirely controllable from Earth.'

Eldred said angrily, 'Haven't you learned not to put all your eggs in one basket?'

The Doctor, Jamie and Zoe began sidling towards the door.

'T-Mat in itself is perfectly effective,' began Miss Kelly.

'What you need is a secondary transportation system,'

argued Eldred. 'A fleet of rockets on permanent stand-by...'

Radnor tried to calm them down. 'Miss Kelly, Professor Eldred, please...'

They were beyond reason. 'There's no need to go to such ridiculous lengths,' said Miss Kelly sharply.

'It's simply a question of common sense,' said Eldred.

'I'm sure the Doctor would agree with me...'

He turned to appeal to the Doctor for confirmation.

But the Doctor was gone, and so were Jamie and Zoe...

Like the proverbial drowned rats, the Doctor, Jamie and Zoe squelched towards the TARDIS. They had had to walk back to the space museum through the Doctor's torrential rain.

As they entered the museum Jamie shook himself like a wet dog. 'Did you have to make it rain as hard as all that, Doctor?'

The Doctor wiped his face with his spotted handkerchief. 'Sometimes I think there's no satisfying you, Jamie!'

Zoe pulled a soaking handkerchief off the top of her head. 'But what did you rush us back here like this for?'

'Well, you know,' said the Doctor vaguely. 'Goodbyes, explanations, it's always rather difficult.'

All of which was quite true. People usually started asking awkward questions at about this stage and the Doctor did hate goodbyes. More importantly, he was well aware that people would expect him to go on solving their problems for them. Radnor, Miss Kelly, Professor Eldred and the rest would manage perfectly well on their own – if they ever stopped wrangling...

The Doctor opened the TARDIS door and popped thankfully inside.

'Well, where are we going now?' asked Zoe.

Jamie laughed. 'Och, it's no use asking him! He's got no more idea than – than the Man in the Moon!'

'I heard that, Jamie,' said the Doctor's voice from inside the TARDIS. His arm shot out and hauled Jamie inside.

'Now, come on!'

Zoe followed Jamie inside and the door closed behind her.

A few minutes later, there was a wheezing, groaning sound and the TARDIS faded away.

Professor Eldred's space museum had lost its most unusual exhibit...

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